

the Appendix

DIGS

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The Appendix

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The Appendix is a quarterly journal of experimental and narrative history; though at times outlandish, everything in its pages is as true as the sources allow. *The Appendix* solicits articles from historians, writers, and artists committed to good storytelling, with an eye for the strange and a suspicion of both jargon and traditional histories. A creature of the web, its format takes advantage of the flexibility of hypertext and modern web presentation techniques to experiment with and explore the process and method of writing history.

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Cover Image: Lyntha Scott Eiler, "Navajos at an Archaeological Dig in Arizona," Environmental Protection Agency, 1972, via Wikimedia Commons.

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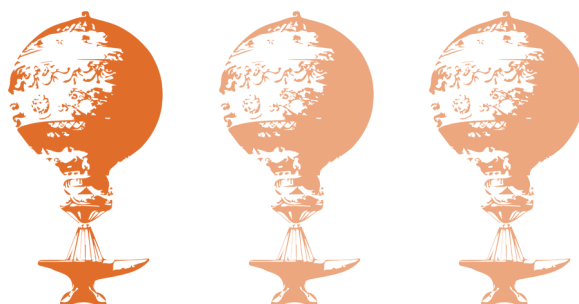
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CHAPTER 1:

Digging in the Dirt





Letter from the Editors: Issue Four: Digs

When Adam dived and Eve span
Who was then a Gentleman?
—John Ball, 1381

WHEN THE ITINERANT “hedge priest” John Ball shouted these words to English peasant rebels in June of 1381, they provoked a riot. Inspired by Ball’s vision of a world before laws and social hierarchies, his audience rushed into the Tower of London and killed the Archbishop of Canterbury. Less than one month later, Ball, too, lay six feet under.

Why did the simple image of a man digging hold such resonance?

“Cursed is the ground for thy sake,” God had rebuked Adam in Genesis. “In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.” Early depictions of Adam and Eve fixated on this image of earth, toil, and mortality: a post-Eden Adam is often

shown sweating with a shovel or spade. To be fully human is to struggle with the earth, these images seem to say—and also, eventually, to return to it.

There’s something to this. Not all human societies are agricultural, but all depend upon our abilities to transform the ground we walk on. Digging, excavating, burying, foraging, and uncovering are core human traits.

The articles in Chapter One of this issue are about digging in its most concrete and earthy sense. We begin with an archaeologist, Carla Klehm, who shows how a handful of glass beads found in the red soil of Botswana can reconstruct centuries of buried history. Next Allison Bigelow explores the silver veins of Potosí, perhaps the most important mine in world history, while artist Justin Berry experiments with the images from one of the first printed mineralogical texts: what do they look like stripped of miners? A pair of articles debate

whether the humble digger of the Kalahari desert, the meerkat, can be said to have a history, while contributions from graphic novelist Jim Ottaviani and fiction writer Michele Stepto round out the chapter.

It is no coincidence that an alternate meaning of "to dig" is "to know, understand or appreciate": etymologically, this double sense harkens back to a conceptual link between excavating and understanding. Chapter Two confronts digging as a form of exploration. Julia Gaffield describes how she unearthed Haiti's long-lost Declaration of Independence, which made international news in 2010. Dan Buck sifts through the fragments of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, and Josi Ward traverses the dusty towns around California's Salton Sea on the lookout for fast-fading traces of the migrant labor camps of the 1930s. Corinne Lampert brings us a tale of digging in the Lucca archives, and the talented Kevin Cannon returns with another cartographic biography, this time of a pioneering female archaeologist. Sometimes the passage of time itself can be a form of burial, as Charles Shaw documents in a spectacular article and group of photos documenting the fading Soviet triumphalism of a Moscow park. Finally, three poems from Molly Brodak elegize the death of a geologist and "the romance of bones."

In nineteenth-century Australia, gold miners began foregoing tents and instead started digging hobbit holes for themselves in the loose sands of the Outback. They took to calling these their "digs," and an alternate sense of the word, as a form of lodging, was born. Chapter Three rounds out the issue with articles on lodgings, like Kate Duffy Osheim's beautiful portrait of Philadelphia's ruined Eastern State Penitentiary and Darrell Hartman's review article about the eternal homes of the pharaohs and those who sought to uncover them. But digs can also be insults—taking a dig at someone has a long history which is traced in our "Historical Digs" piece, and in Erika Bsumek's profile of the painter George Catlin and the disastrous consequences of his portrait of a Lakota warrior named Mah-tó che-ga.

Digging may seem like the simple act of moving dirt, but it has deep resonances. We hope our excavations of the word are entertaining and edify-



Adam delving in a stained glass window at Canterbury Cathedral, circa 1176.
Canterbury Chapel



Burying dead at Antietam, 1862.
Wikimedia Commons

ing, but above all that they inspire you, our reader, to go digging yourself. Maybe the late Seamus Heaney put it best, as he contrasted the memory of his father cutting peat on a rainy day in Ireland, 1966, with the more poetical earth he delved:

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it.

Your Appendix editors,
Benjamin Breen, Felipe Cruz, Christopher Heaney, Brian Jones, and Amy Kohout



Trade Tales and Tiny Trails: Glass Beads in the Kalahari Desert

by Carla Klehm

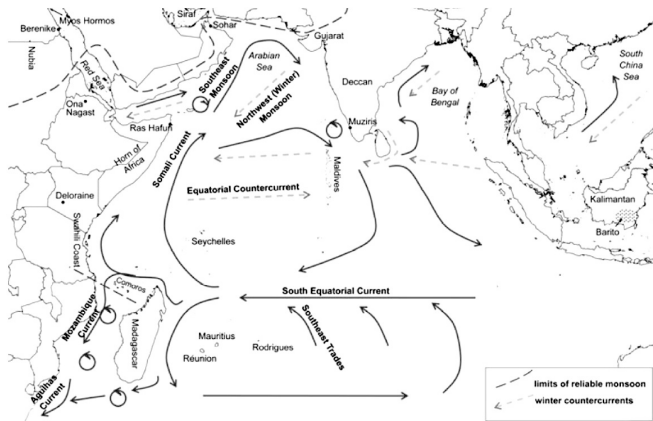
THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE of Khubu la Dintša in Botswana is littered with broken-down entranceways of mud and stone melted and slumped inwards on themselves: dirty, stacked lumpy piles defeated and retired from the seasonal rains. Paths lined with stones taken from those archaeological walls have been kicked out of alignment by grazing cattle or scampering kudus. Less than ten years earlier, large stone circles led to a dancing floor in front of a collapsing wooden structure, which housed purification basins. Thirty meters beyond these basins, at the base of a man-made cave christened by a sacrificed snake, sits a clay-lined basin, still filled with blue-and-white striped glass beads. Although these beads are modern, they have ancient echoes that extend nearly 1,000 years ago in the past.

Glass beads, more than any other type of artifact, help us make sense of the last 600 years of Kalahari history. Even today, they play a role in local Batswana communities and public health and medical treatment; and as such, glass beads are woven into the social fabric of Khubu la Dintša, just as they were when Indo-Arabian traders introduced them to Africa. Glass beads help link the archaeologist to a time and a place beyond ancient texts and oral histories, when this part of Africa—thousands of miles from the Indian Ocean—traded with the Middle East, India, Indonesia, and China. This is a story about the tiny trails of history the beads have left us. In the past as well as in the present, these beads have played a social role in how people connect themselves to one another and their ancestors.



Basin containing blue and blue-and-white striped glass beads offered as part of the *phekolo* ceremony that took place at Khubu la Dintša from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s.

Carla Klehm, 2010



Map of the Indian Ocean monsoon wind and ocean currents that connects East and Southern Africa, the Middle East, and South and Southeast Asia.

Nicole Boivin, Alison Crowther, Richard Helm, and Dorian Q. Fuller, "East Africa and Madagascar in the Indian Ocean World," *Journal of World Prehistory* 26(2013): 221

I first held these glass beads in 2009, as a graduate student working on these prehistoric, pre-European African cities and kingdoms. Looking at these tiny artifacts, I struggled to control my breathing, terrified of blowing them out of my hand back into the Kalahari dirt. These colorful glass seed beads, many of which can hardly fit in the edge of a pin, traveled a long, long way to get to the Kalahari. During the Southern African Iron Age (~600-1750 CE), these tiny beads traveled as commodities around the Indian Ocean, passing through the hands of many traders and sailors from the Middle East and Asia to eventually arrive at in Botswana at Khubu la Dintša.



FROM ABOUT 600 to 1750 CE, the Indian Ocean trade played a crucial role in the development of cities and kingdoms in southern Africa. Communities that grew sorghum and millet on landscapes filled with wandering goats, bleating sheep, and herds of cows began to become involved in regional and long-distance exchange that ultimately linked them to Indo-Asian trade systems that used the monsoon winds to trade among Africa, the Middle East, India, China, Madagascar, and Indonesia. In southern Africa, trade involved goods including ivory, gold, rhino horns, exotic animals, and more locally iron, copper, tin, salt, and cattle. These goods were traded for cloth, prestige ceramics, and, of course, glass beads.

Our site of Khubu la Dintša (in the 13th and 14th centuries CE) differed greatly from its contemporaries, both in and out of Africa. In 1415 CE the ancient city of Malindi was visited by a Chinese ambassador sailing a fleet 250 times the size of the Columbus voyage, and gifted the Chinese emperor Yong'le with two giraffes. In the 15th century CE, just a few hundred kilometers east of Khubu la Dintša, Great Zimbabwe controlled the southern African gold trade, and was guarded by free-standing stone enclosures up to 36 feet high and 20 feet thick, built with cut granite blocks without the use of mortar. Khubu la Dintša did not have Chinese visitors nor did

it have architectural feats in stone. Yet, the Khubu la Dintša people and their glass beads were linked to all of these players—a node in the network of trade goods and ideas.

Arab, Chinese, and Portuguese documents describe the lands where they are trading for gold, but geographic locations are often lacking, leaving most of the continent a virtual question mark in terms of where and how settlements and cities developed. Written documents by Arab, Chinese, and Portuguese traders describe their travels, but anything outside of their mercantile focus leaves unmapped and unknown areas. These trade networks extended thousands of kilometers into the interior of Africa—far beyond the explorations of these travelers—and we are left with archaeological evidence to infer their expanse. The glass beads, however, can fill in these geographic gaps. The analysis of the excavated beads' chemical composition, through mass spectrometry, allows us to retrace these trade routes to deep into the interior of Africa. Major and minor elements in these glass beads can be used to be diagnostic of the place of origin (provenience) as well as the technological advances in melting the glass, making the beads, and coloring them. From this, we're able to infer a best estimate of when the beads were manufactured. Ancient glass is most often made from silica sand, to which an alkali or alkali earth-based flux is added to keep the melting point low. The glass beads found in sub-Saharan Africa are made from three main components: silica (from the sand), lime, and soda (the alkali). The type of soda can be broadly diagnostic of when and where the glass beads were made. With Indian Ocean beads, it's either mineral soda or plant ash soda glass. Magnesium oxide (MgO) serves as the simplest determinant of the soda type: plant ash beads contain more than mineral soda glass beads, often substantially so.

We now know that many of these early glass beads that come to the Kalahari date to the 8th century CE and come from the Middle East—from Iran and areas east of the Euphrates River. These beads are followed by high aluminum mineral soda beads during the 10th century, from South or even Southeast Asia. By the 13th century—and what we see at Khubu la Dintša—are mostly high-aluminum, low-lime (CaO) glass beads that again

are coming from the Middle East, from an area distinctly (read: chemically) different from earlier. By the early 15th century, the beads are again flowing from South Asia, and are documented by Portuguese sources that help trace their places of origin. The beads and their material history fill in where the other documents leave off.



KHUBU LA DINTŠA is actually a small site—one of a number of similar sites—clustered around the ancient trade center, Bosutswe. For hundreds of years, Bosutswe (700-1700 CE) was a major regional hub for Indian Ocean trade. Bosutswe functioned as both a trade bottleneck to gain access across the Kalahari up towards the Congolese Basin and as a provider of cattle—a crucial component for those long journeys undertaken by traders. The cattle trade at Bosutswe peaked between 1200-1450 CE, when the highest number of “status” items like glass beads and bronze metal jewelry are found at the site.

Khubu la Dintša, dating from 1220-1420 CE, is located 14km to the northwest of Bosutswe. Both Bosutswe and Khubu la Dintša are hilltops, and just close enough to one another that one can see smoke, fires, and signals from one hilltop to the other. At Khubu la Dintša, two long, 30-meter stone walls border the site. In between the walls, scraggly patches of buffalo grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*), signify the location of ancient remains; this vegetation preferentially grows on the thick kraal (animal pen) deposits that are characteristic of African Iron Age sites, outgrowing almost every other type of vegetation. These kraals would have been where the animals were kept at night after long days of grazing the nearby grasses.

My own recent excavations at Khubu la Dintša revealed a surprising find: 229 Indian Ocean glass beads. The concentrations of these glass beads from Khubu la Dintša were higher than the elite areas at Bosutswe, the elite trade center. Not only could these sites see one another, they were also intimately connected. These beads, and local and long-distance trade brought these two sites together, linking them economically, with Bosutswe the major center and therefore its political ally. These sites were linked socially as well, as other



Ancient stone walls associated with the site of Khubu la Dintša, dating back to the 14th century CE.
Carla Klehm, 2010



View of the Bosutswe region from the top of Khubu la Dintša. Bosutswe is the hilltop located in the far left area of the landscape; Mmadipudi Hill, another Iron Age hilltop site, is visible on the far right.
Carla Klehm, 2011

artifacts like elite ceramics suggest that alliances between the settlements at both sites were political allies through marriage.

One strong possibility for these tight ties may be that Bosutswe depended on Khubu la Dintša for access to grazing grounds that an outlying site like Khubu la Dintša would have been able to control. As Bosutswe became increasingly important in the regional trade, the increased number of cattle would have needed good grass and plenty of areas to graze in. Moreover, increased riches associated with this long-distance trade would have meant more cattle for the elite at Bosutswe—a major status symbol in ancient southern African societies. The marginal environment of the Kalahari Desert would have meant that outlying communities would have been incorporated both economically, but also through social and political alliances and ties, possibly through marriages. Khubu la Dintša would have been a place to keep the cattle, bought with their burgeoning riches, and an opportunity for the site to get rich on glass beads.

While trade at Bosutswe Khubu la Dintša was beginning to die out in the 15th and 16th centuries CE, trade elsewhere in Africa was still thriving along with the introduction of a new trade player: the Portuguese. It is through the diaries, notes, and records associated with these Portuguese merchants and, later, British colonials, that we continue to trace the story of these ancient glass beads, and the many people they encountered.

Portuguese merchants became involved in this Indian Ocean trade in the 15th century CE and quickly noted the high trade value placed on glass beads. And their African trade partners were specific about their point of origin: only glass beads originating from the Indian Ocean were considered proper currency. European glass beads were considered unacceptable. Therefore, Portuguese traders would travel all the way to ports in India in order to obtain beads for African trade. George McCall Theal, a British historian at the turn of the 20th century, translated many of these

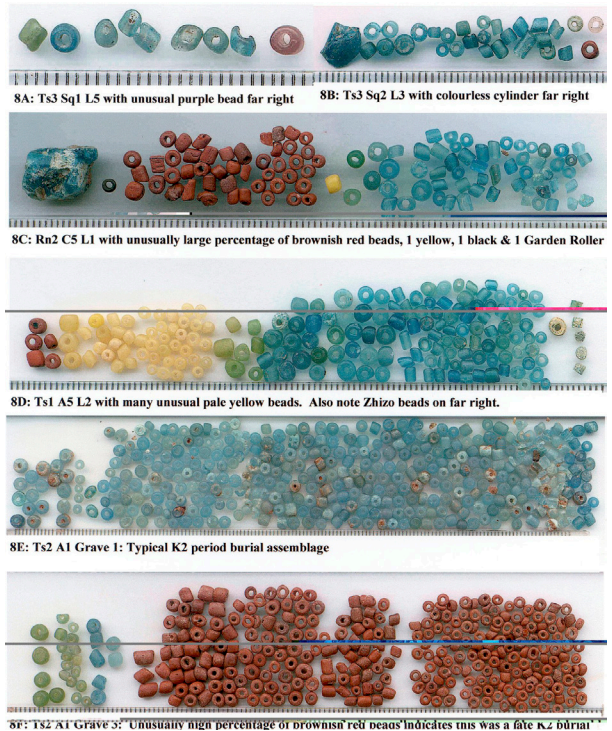
Portuguese documents. In a few short samples, these Indian Ocean glass beads appear repeatedly:

1513: The merchants take to Sofala gold which they give to the Moors without weighing for coloured cloths and beads which among them are much valued, which beads come from Cambaya.

1554: Among them was one of whom the rest seemed to make the most account ... he was distinguished from them by wearing a few beads red in colour, round, and about the same size as coriander seeds, which we rejoiced to see, it seeming to us that these beads being in his possession proved that we were near some river frequented by trading vessels, for they are only made in the kingdom of Cambaya, and are brought by the hands of our people to this coast.

1554: As the purpose of that king in desiring to have us there was not all founded in virtue, but partly in interest, a plague which generally infects most people (however rustic they may be), his hope was to get some gold or jewels by it, not because such things were necessary for his use, but because he knew that the Portuguese of the ship which came there in the past years bought these things from those who robbed Manuel de Sousa Sepulveda, giving beads in exchange, which they consider as great a treasure as are gold and jewellery with us.

These Portuguese traders describe how glass beads played a large role in the exchange of African trade goods, especially gold. Noted in multiple accounts was the port of Cambay (present day Khambhat) in southwest India, one of several centers for glass bead manufacturing. In the second passage, glass beads signal social standing in African groups in contact with Indian Ocean traders. Notably, the most distinguished individual wore a string of Indian Ocean glass beads. The final excerpt compares glass beads to other “valuable” items in the eyes of the Portuguese traders. The African traders saw little intrinsic worth in gold or jewels taken from a shipwrecked Portuguese vessel. These salvaged goods were seen as a way to trade for glass beads from the next group of Portuguese traders they would encounter.



Indian Ocean glass beads from the site of K2, a major Iron Age site in South Africa dating to the 11th century CE. These beads have been traced back to their Indian Ocean roots through LA-ICP-MS analysis.

Marilee Wood, “Glass Beads and Pre-European Trade in the Shashe-Limpopo Region” (PhD diss., University of Witwatersrand, 2005)

Glass beads continued to remain important in southern Africa, even after the Indian Ocean trade had diminished. Dubroc cites an account from the famed David Livingstone, a 19th-century British missionary in Botswana, who interpreted glass beads as a form of monetary currency. He also noted that the size and shape of beads had different values, which he describes through pictures:

The Waiyau prefer exceedingly small beads, the size of mustard-seed, and of various colors, but they must be opaque ... but by far the most valuable of all is a small white oblong bead ... one pound weight of these beads buy a tusk of ivory, at the south end of Tanganyika, so big that a strong man could not carry it more than two hours.

Other colonialists in Africa took advantage of the perceived value of glass beads, bribing chil-



Burial goods associated with Burial 72 in the Newton Cemetery, Barbados.

J. S. Handler, "From Cambay in India to Barbados in the Caribbean: Two Unique Beads from Newton Plantation Slave Cemetery," *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter*, March 2007

dren to attend missionary schools. Even in the African Diaspora, while African peoples were traded as slaves to plantations in North America, South America, and the Caribbean, beads associated with the Indian Ocean trade retained importance. Newton Cemetery, located in southern Barbados, is a slave burial ground from the late 17th and early 18th centuries that contains first and second generation African and Afro-Caribbean slaves. In this cemetery, we see beads, including glass beads, play a significant role in the burial practices. For example, one burial (termed Burial 72, a male) was found with burial items which included European glass beads, drilled dog teeth, fish vertebrae, seven cowry shells, and a Carnelian bead from Cambay. Although Carnelian beads are stone, not glass, their Indian Ocean origins imply the enduring symbolic presence Indian Ocean trade had in African societies.



WE KNOW GLASS BEADS traveled long distances—tens of thousands of miles—to get to their place in southern Africa 700 years ago. We know that these beads can retrace these routes, and tell us about a changing landscape of power for a people increasingly connected to the world around them—worlds overseas unlike anything that had ever been seen before. Their importance lived on long after this trading world was over, from the schoolyards of 19th-century missionaries, echoing in slave burials in the New World. However glamorous and glitzy these beads appear as artifacts, they still have a living cultural history—a voice and materiality that reverberates through Khubu la Dintša even today.

From 1994 until the mid 2000s Khubu la Dintša was used as an ancestral church called *Tumelo mo Badimong* ("faith in ancestral spirits"). By 2002, Khubu la Dintša was a site for a yearly purification ritual, known as *phekolo*, headed by a local spiritual leader, Motofela Molato, every July.



Blue-green, yellow, and brownish-red Indian Ocean glass beads found at Khubu la Dintša. Also visible in the photo are ostrich eggshell and other shell beads found at the site.
Carla Klehm, 2011

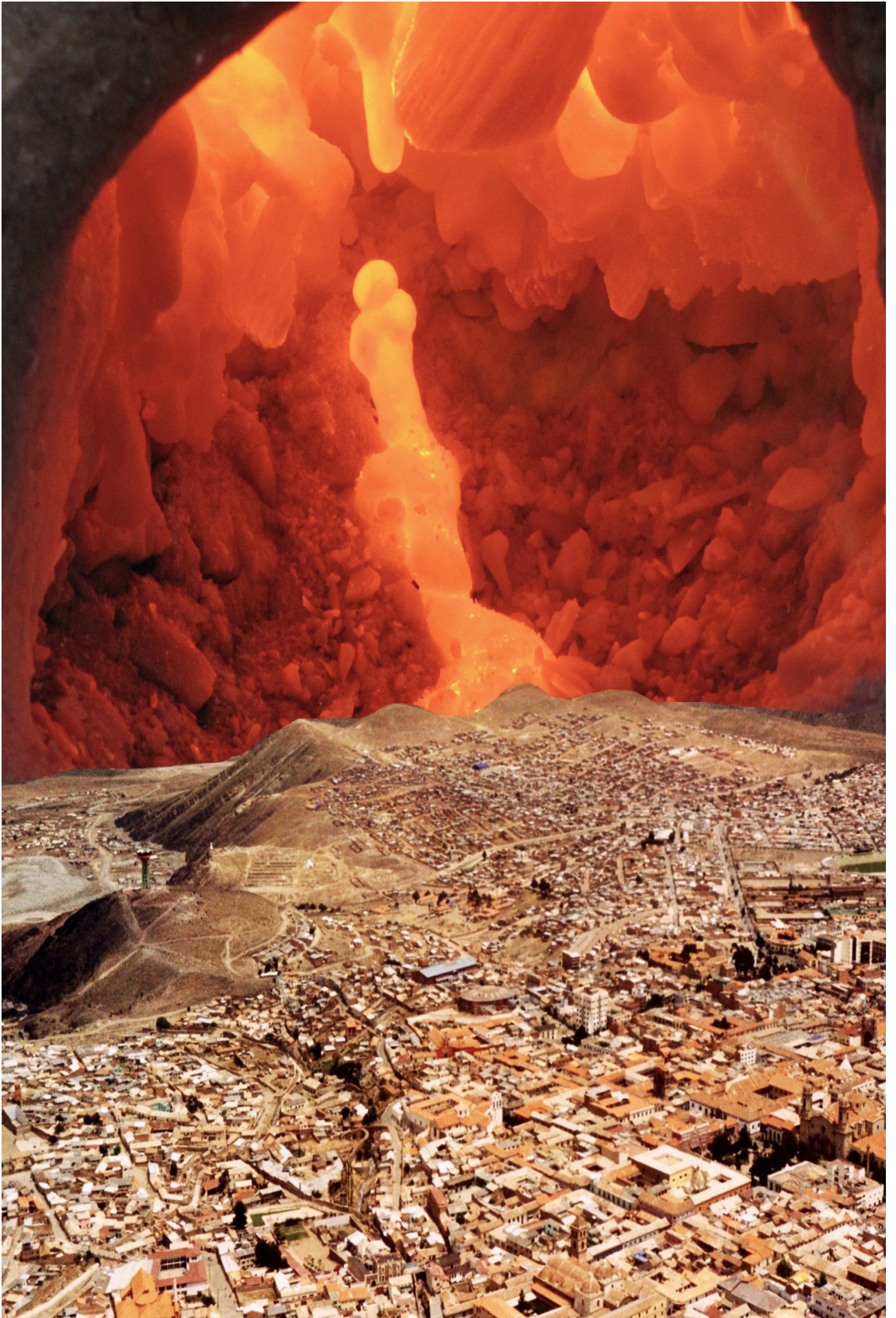
Phekolo churches have sprung up informally around Botswana, partially in response to the outbreak and rapid spread of HIV/AIDS. Notions of AIDS as a punishment given from the ancestors, as witchcraft, or even *boswagadi* (the end result of having sex with the spouse of a dead person before a purification ritual) existed as alternative explanations for the endemic. Churches like Molato's attempted to reconnect their members with their ancestors and sought a spiritual harmony with *botho*, or humanhood.

At Khubu la Dintša, spiritual imbalance brought 150 congregants together every July, traveling from the town of Letlhakane, over 160 kilometers away, to this place. At Khubu la Dintša, Molato saw lion paw-prints in some of the rocks on the hill. Lions have strong religious and symbolic importance in Batswana society, as they play part of a creation myth. Impressions in two of the rocks were thought to be lions' footprints from a time when the earth was still soft. Small altars were built around each. Whitewashed stones, bleached as such to show association with the ancestors, lined the hilltop path to the main ceremony area. This main area included a dancing floor, lined with white ash obtained from archaeological deposits (ancient cow dung makes for white ash), to again make a connection to the ancestors. Cleansing basins located in a wooden structure allowed purification for the church's followers. And, on the far side of the hill, glass beads were left in an offering for the ancestors, as a way to communicate, honor, and ask for help.



TODAY, ONLY GLASS BEADS are left for us to infer the different cultural narratives that surround them. As objects of material culture, these beads help us go beyond the limits of ancient texts and explore thousands of kilometers into the African interior, linking the Kalahari to the Middle East and India over a thousand years ago. Beads boldly proclaim the emergence of another trade partner, Bosutswe, into the Indian Ocean trade network, and the complex set of relationships with outlying areas needed to keep the cattle coming. A shoeless congregation brought glass beads to this same place on cool, dark July nights. Beads that puzzle and draw curiosity of far-off worlds; beads integral to the making of self, that help people cling to a past and identity from the other side of the world into the afterlife; beads that speak to peoples coping with uncertainty in the world, with AIDS and spiritual imbalance, with frustration, anger, and hope; beads the archaeologist is left to decode, to listen to, to sort through their multiple stories.

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Mining the Languages of Empire in the Early Americas

by Allison Bigelow

“OYE HUEÓN ESTÁ tan rica la mina,” one operative said to his friend on a typical March day in the altiplano, nearly ten years ago.

It was warm in the sunny spaces where they walked, and chilly on the bench where I sat in the shade of the dining hall, waiting for a bus to take me up the hill and back to the classroom where I taught English to miners, metallurgists, and managers in my first “real job” after college. As one of a handful of women then working among some 700 male employees of Cerro Colorado, an open-pit copper mine in the north of Chile, I was used to catcalls and comments. But this one was different, because this miner used the technical language of his profession to say something prohibited by company policy. Mines, ores, and metallic grades are evaluated in terms of their richness (*rica*), and *mina* is slang for “woman,” at least in Chile. Thus, the miner said two things at once: “that mine has excellent metallic ore” and “that woman is so fine.”

Later, it struck me that the language of science, especially in applied, commercialized sciences like mining and metallurgy, might be full of these sorts of expressions of gender and sexuality—and probably race, ethnicity, and all of the nuances of human cultures, because people would translate the terms of their everyday lives into a language that revealed their particular ways of being in the world. So I went to graduate school and began digging in colonial archives for scientific texts that both revealed these kinds of terms and showed how metaphors came to matter in the seventeenth century.

The colonial period—with its multiple, uneven, and incomplete transitions from indigenous empires like the Inca and Mexica to the Hispanic empire—produced highly original expressions of mining and metallurgical theories and practices. New linguistic communities from Africa, Europe, and the Americas were thrown together, willingly



Image of Potosí in Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas, *Historia general* (Antwerp, 1728).

John Carter Brown Library at Brown University

and unwillingly, and they developed new technologies that required new terminologies.

Nowhere do we see these patterns more clearly than in the silver industry, the largest sector of the Spanish American economy and one that generated some 86 million kilos of silver between 1492 and 1810. Because of its economic importance, the viceroalties of Mexico and Peru were reorganized to facilitate the mining and minting of silver. This was the standardized currency of an empire that transported American silver to Asian markets in exchange for goods and peoples bought and sold in Europe and Africa. We have long known that the silver industry influenced life in the colonial Americas and the Atlantic world on social, political, and economic levels. Studying the language of silver mining shows how it shaped scientific ideas and even social categories.

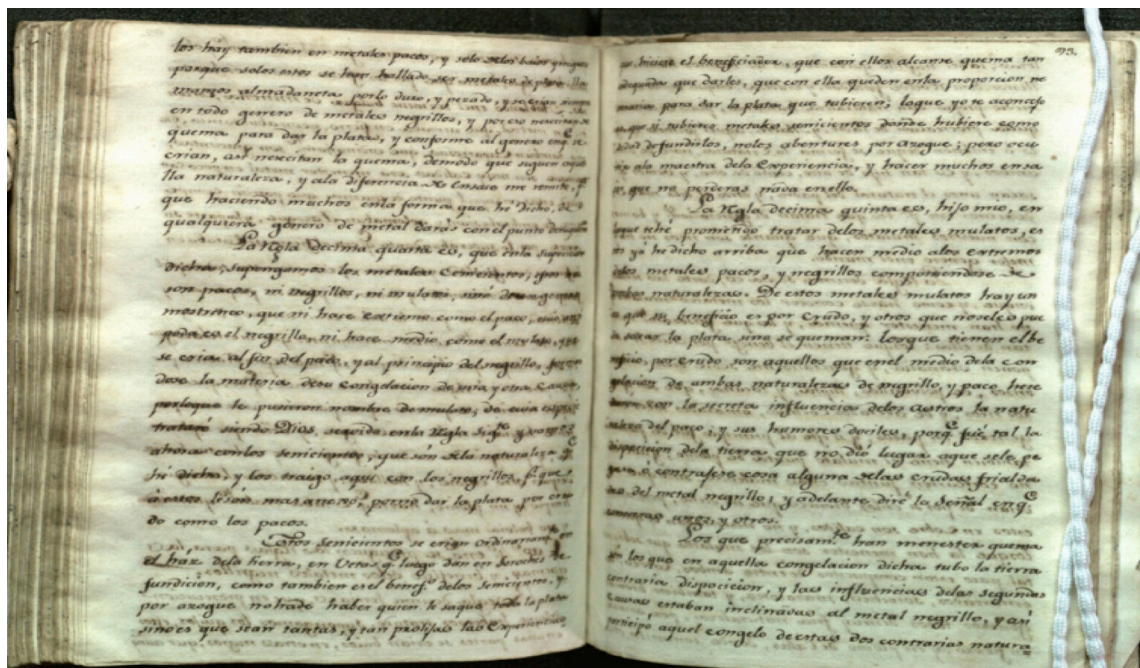
The new method of amalgamation (*nuevo beneficio de azogue*) that developed in the highlands of central Mexico was crucial to the production of colonial silver and imperial wealth. Refiners in Renaissance Europe, like their predecessors in antiquity, had treated precious metals with mercury to recover particles from metals that were discarded into slag heaps. This was a very different procedure than the methods required to process ore that was excavated from the veins of deep, underground tunnels, and to treat varieties of silver (Ag) that were often mixed with other substances, such as lead (Pb), tin (Sn), or copper (Cu), which revealed different colors that miners skillfully identified on the walls of dark and dusty passages.

In Spanish America, mixed minerals were given names that indexed the multilingual nature of colonial mining and metallurgy with the racialized terms of colonial science. Silver bodies mixed with iron (Fe) and sulfur (S) were called *metales mulatos y negrillos*, and they were organized into what miners like Álvaro Alonso Barba called *castas de metales*. This scientific language and method of sorting helped to reinforce the classification practices that were employed by legal theorists and colonial officials to categorize mixed-race peoples

(*castas*) into hierarchies based on socioeconomic status, kinship networks, and skin color.

In mining, as in the legal negotiations of *casta* status for indigenous, black, and creole subjects, these categories of silver were determined in relation to one another. As one metallurgist instructed his son, some *metales mulatos* (mulato metals) had to be smelted like *negrillos*, while others were amalgamated with mercury, following the methods used for *pacos*—a Hispanized version of the Quechua term *ppaqu*, or “reddish.” In his *Directorio de beneficiadores*, Juan de Alcalá y Hamurrio analogized metallic mixtures to children who took equally from their mothers and fathers to explain why *metales mulatos* “are a middle point between *pacos* and *negrillos*, formed of both natures.”

But Spanish was not the only language providing the terms of classification in colonial silver mining and metallurgy. Indigenous artisans figured so prominently in the mining of silver and its refinement into imperial wealth that officials in Alto Perú required native *plateros* (silversmiths) to practice within the city limits of the Villa Imperial, rather than provincial smitheries, and they punished non-compliers with two years of service



Juan de Alcalá y Hamurrio, *Directorio de beneficiadores* (1737 [ca. 1691]: Lima [Potosí?]), 90.
Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico

in the *Hospital de los Naturales* (Indian Hospital). Given the demographic dominance and technical masteries of indigenous miners and refiners, it is not surprising to find that Spanish miners accommodated the sounds and syntaxes of the Andean languages Quechua and Aymara.

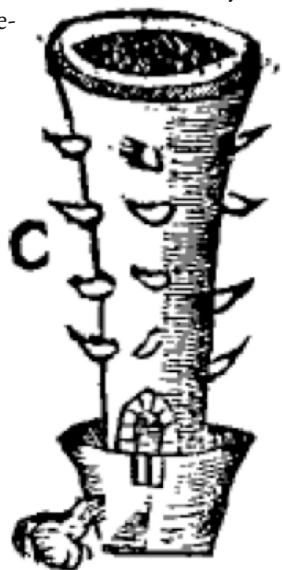
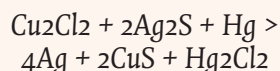
In and around Potosí, for example, surface-level mixtures of silver and copper were called *pacos*, “reddish,” while gray-blue mixtures of silver and lead were called *oque*s, or what one Spanish metallurgist translated as “friarish” suggesting that indigenous miners analogized the gray robes of Franciscan friars to the metals that they harvested from mines. One scholar has traced the use of oque-colored threads in quipus to specific kinship networks, called *ayllus*, suggesting that we might be able to use the linguistic footprints of these naming practices to determine the identities of native mining communities in ways that written documents alone have not allowed.

Historians of the colonial Andes have long suggested that indigenous and Iberian metallurgical methods were two separate systems, and that the one, in which native miners used wind ovens (*guairas*) to process high-grade ores, declined throughout the seventeenth century, as the other, marked by new technologies that amalgamated low-grade ores like *negrillos*, rose over the course of the colonial era. The language of silver amalgamation treatises, however, allows us to see where and how indigenous knowledge systems and technical practices shaped the science of colonial silver, just as native names for minerals—and their Hispanized forms—provided terms of classification.

But first, we need to have a sense of what the ten-step process of colonial amalgamation looked like. According to Modesto Bargalló, minerals were crushed (1) and sorted into piles (2), at which point they were watered, mixed with reagents, namely mercury, salt, and a solution of distilled copper, called *magistral* (3-5). The wet mixtures were then stomped (6) and washed (7) to separate

the incorporated mercury from the silver (8). The unincorporated mercury was removed from the bins to be used again (9), while the incorporated masses were sent to refining ovens (10), some of which were specially designed to separate mixtures of silver and copper or lead.

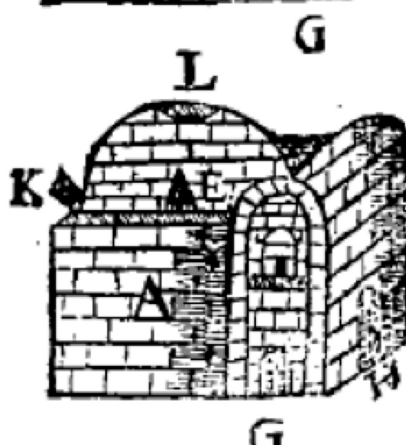
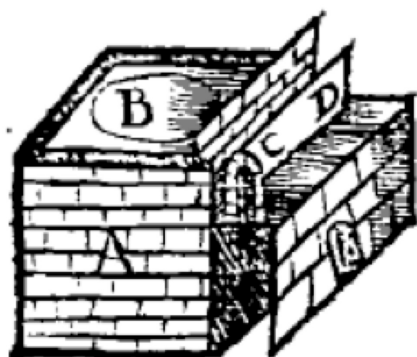
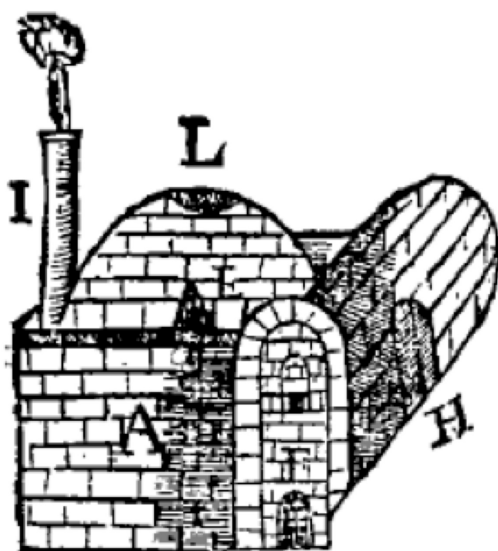
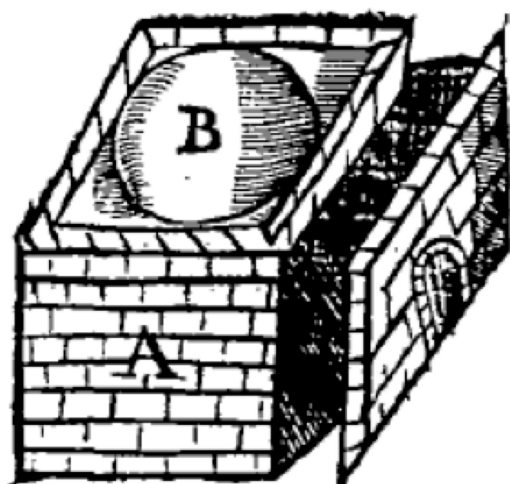
We now explain these changes with chemical formulas that show how mercury brings out silver particles by binding to other elements:



Andean wind oven (*guaira*), from Álvaro Alonso Barba, *Arte de los metales* (Madrid: 1640), 80v.

Early modern miners and refiners, however, had to use other terms in the days before the development of modern chemistry. Unsurprisingly, they applied terms and ideas they already knew to explain the physical and chemical changes in this new process, much as we use computer analogies to explain the inner workings of the mind (“my hard drive is full”) or car analogies to explain obtuse political processes (“Congressional debates are stuck in reverse”). And, also unsurprisingly, the old terms didn’t quite fit the new realities.

European metallurgists described metals in the humoral language of antiquity. Following natural philosophers and medical writers like Empedocles (ca. 495-435 BCE), Galen (129-200), and Aristotle (384-322), metals, like people, plants, and planets, were classified as hot, cold, wet, and dry, in various combinations. Silver (Ag) and lead (Pb), shared what Vanoccio Biringuccio (1480 – ca. 1540), smelter and munitions manager for Pope Paul III, called in his *Pirotechnica* a “*unione amichevole*” marked by “*simpasta con l'altra*.” This friendly union was so named for the sympathy (*simpasta*) or similarity that the two metals shared, and these ideas informed deep patterns of analogical thinking in which natural scientists explained botanical growth, tidal patterns, and the movement of stars across the sky in terms of human emotions like love and sympathy, or else enmity and antipathy.



Refining ovens in Barba, *Arte de los metales* (1640: 78v).
Internet Archive

Silver (Ag) and chemically-related quicksilver, or mercury (Hg), were also friendly substances, so their coming together involved, as Biringuccio explained in emotionally neutral language, “tak[ing] from the substance that the material contains.”

This metallic union of similar things—like all combinations of like bodies—did not produce anything new or cause matter to change shape, humoral theory suggested, because only opposite forces like hot and cold, or male and female, could do so.

Refiners in the colonial Americas also used the terms of natural philosophers like Aristotle, but they did so in different ways. For metallurgical writers like Álvaro Alonso Barba in Peru and the

physician Juan de Cárdenas in Mexico, the friendly similarities of silver and mercury transformed during the amalgamation process into a relationship marked by desire, appetite, embrace, and penetration—the kind of productive and reproductive terms typically reserved for the generative couplings of different essences.

In his *Problemas y secretos maravillosos de las Indias* (México, 1591), Cárdenas argued that sympathy and likeness made it possible for silver and mercury to incorporate in an erotic act of embrace (*abrazar*):

mercury, through the aforementioned friendship, embraces silver; one must understand that silver and mercury love and

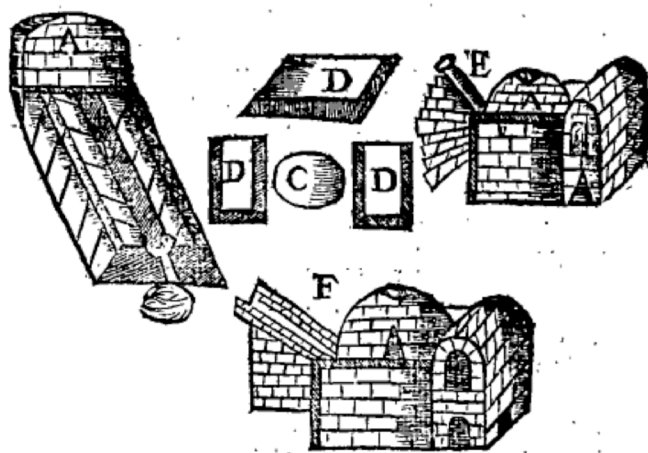
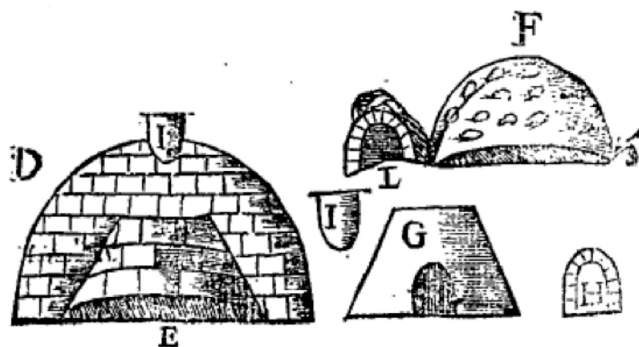
appeal to each other, procuring through their friendship to embrace and unite, the one with the other; they are cast together and the mercury incorporates the silver so as to embrace it through its great friendship and analogy, because it is such a friend and so familiar with the silver.

Barba made the same conclusion in Peru, insisting with the full weight of thirty years of experience as a metallurgist in the Andes that the “friendship” of the two mineral bodies allowed them to generate new amalgams, called *pella*:

The closeness and convenience that mercury has naturally with metals is clearly shown, absent other arguments, by the ease with which it unites with metals, penetrates them and becomes imbued, converting them into what we call *pella*; it keeps no such company with any other thing.

The metallurgical technologies developed in Latin America required that colonial practitioners reinterpret the traditional definitions of similarity and difference, scientific concepts and analogical roots that had been transmitted from antiquity to the medieval Middle East and Renaissance Europe. These new ways of thinking made possible the unimaginable wealth of the Hapsburg Empire in the early modern era, along with material and economic realities that were impossible to ignore. By tracing the shifts in language that colonial scientific writers like Barba and Cárdenas used to explain New World technologies, we can appreciate how a new understanding of what it meant to be like and unlike allowed indigenous African and Iberian miners to scale up metallurgical methods from the Old World, and to use them to treat new mineralogical mixtures in new ways. But language alone cannot explain why or how these scientific practitioners came to their new ideas. For that, we need to compare what miners said in their own words and how their letters were translated for other readers. Vocabularies and ideas that circulated in Renaissance Europe were translated com-

By digging into archives in new ways, we can begin to see mining and metallurgy not just as material cultures, but also as cultures that matter.



Refining ovens for separating metallic mixtures in Barba, *Arte de los metales* (1640: 80v and 82).

Internet Archive

THE
FIRST BOOK
 OF THE
ART of METTALS,
 In which is
 Declared the manner
 OF THEIR
GENERATION;
 AND THE
CONCOMITANTS
 of Them.

Written in *Spanish* by *Alvaro Alonso Barba*, Master of Art, born in the Town of *Lepe* in *Andaluzia*, and Curate of *St. Bernards Parish* in the Imperial City of *Potosi*, in the Kingdom of *Peru* in the *West-Indies*, in the Year, 1640.

Translated into English in the Year 1669.

L O N D O N,
 Printed for *S. Mearne*, Bookbinder to the
 Kings most Excellent Majesty, 1670.

Edward Montagu, *First Book of the Art of Mettals* (London, 1670).
 Early English Books Online

fortably enough from one European language to another. English translators easily found Aristotelian terms like “sympathy” and “antipathy” to express relationships between American metals, even when they and their readers had never seen or heard of these ores before. But when translators get the terms wrong, we can see where they struggle to find ways to express ideas and practices that are new to them.

In 1670, Edward Montagu (1625-1672), Earl of Sandwich and English ambassador to Spain, published his translation of Barba’s *Arte de los metales*, revealing ideas that were translated and mistranslated across imperial scientific discourse. For example, Barba recommended that miners incorporate mercury to partially-formed amalgams in two steps, resulting in higher yields of silver and fewer material losses: “y mientras mas fuere menos conchos se causarán.” However, Montagu translated the passage as “the more Quicksilver there was, the fewer inequalities like Oyster shells will be produced,” taking the term conchos to mean “Oyster shells” because he did not realize that Barba used a Hispanized version of the Quechua word *qunchu* (dreg, sediment, remains). We have already seen how Quechua terms for varieties of silver were incorporated into Spanish names for raw materials, but this passage allows us to see where indigenous vocabularies structured the practices of new metallurgical technologies.

This moment of mistranslation might also help to explain the conceptual origins of the new definitions of similarity and difference that large-scale colonial amalgamation technologies required. Whereas Spanish writers used a language of emotion and affect (*abrazar*, *amar*), Montagu described the union of silver and mercury in much more neutral terms: “for the Quicksilver to lay hold of, and incorporate itself with the Silver that is in it,” “so shall the dry Plate be collected together.” Like the case of conchos/dregs/“Oyster shells,” the mistranslation of *abrazar*/embrace/“lay hold” shows where Montagu misses the mark, perhaps because the new understanding of the generative potential of similarity emerged in

whole or in part from indigenous or creole knowledge systems in the Americas, rather than the epistemologies of the Old World with which he was familiar.

Historians have long recognized the unique demographic conditions of colonial American mining and metallurgy, and they have noted that it cannot be a coincidence that new technologies of amalgamation were developed in these spaces. Silver mining was by far the largest industry in Spanish America, one whose impact on global markets, transportation networks, and economic exchanges throughout the Hapsburg imperial world was, according to Peter J. Bakewell “almost beyond measure.”

Fortunately, new interdisciplinary methods emerging in the interstices of history, literature, linguistics, and archaeology are allowing us to study the contributions of indigenous and creole miners and refiners in ways that more traditional approaches have not always allowed. We might never be able to measure the full impact of miners who “wrote without letters,” as Walter Mignolo has so wonderfully put it. Yet integrating literary methods of close reading with histories of science allows us to catch a glimpse of these women and men who shaped the making of a new world in the early modern era.

By digging into old archives in new ways—taking texts in their original languages to root out the epistemological play of discourse and mine the coloniality of power—we can begin to see mining and metallurgy not just as material cultures, but also as cultures that matter.

De Re Metallica

by Justin Berry

De Re Metallica, by Georgius Agricola (Georg Pawer) was one of the earliest books on metallurgy and mining to be based on observation, rather than relying on the word of others or personal speculation. Published in 1556, it was illustrated with woodcuts based on on-site drawings by the artist Basilius Wefring.

For contemporary artist Justin Berry, the most fascinating features of the book are these woodcuts and the multiple levels on which they operate. Like all drawings from observation, they reveal more than they intend. Though their overt purpose is to show the mechanisms and implements of the mining process, they also show the world around those objects, such as the ground ripped open, the trees cut down, and the refuse of the mining process running off into the waterways.

By making the original subject of these drawings—the human intervention—vanish, Justin Berry creates a new illustration, which focuses on the landscape itself. We see a scene that appears to be the aftermath of a battle or the site of some natural catastrophe. Though in truth it is neither, perhaps in some ways it is both.

There are many arts and sciences of which the miner should not be ignorant. First there is Philosophy, that he may discern the origin, cause, and nature of subterranean things, for then he will be able to dig out the veins easily and advantageously... Secondly, there is Medicine, that he may be able to look after his diggers and workmen, that he himself may be able to heal them or may see that doctors do so. Thirdly, to follow Astronomy, that he may judge the direction of the veins.

– Georgius Agricola,
De Re Metallica, Book One





A—TWIG. B—TRENCH.



A— B—



A. C.— MOUNTAIN. B—

SOUTH



A, B, C—

D, E, F—



A—

B—

C—

D—



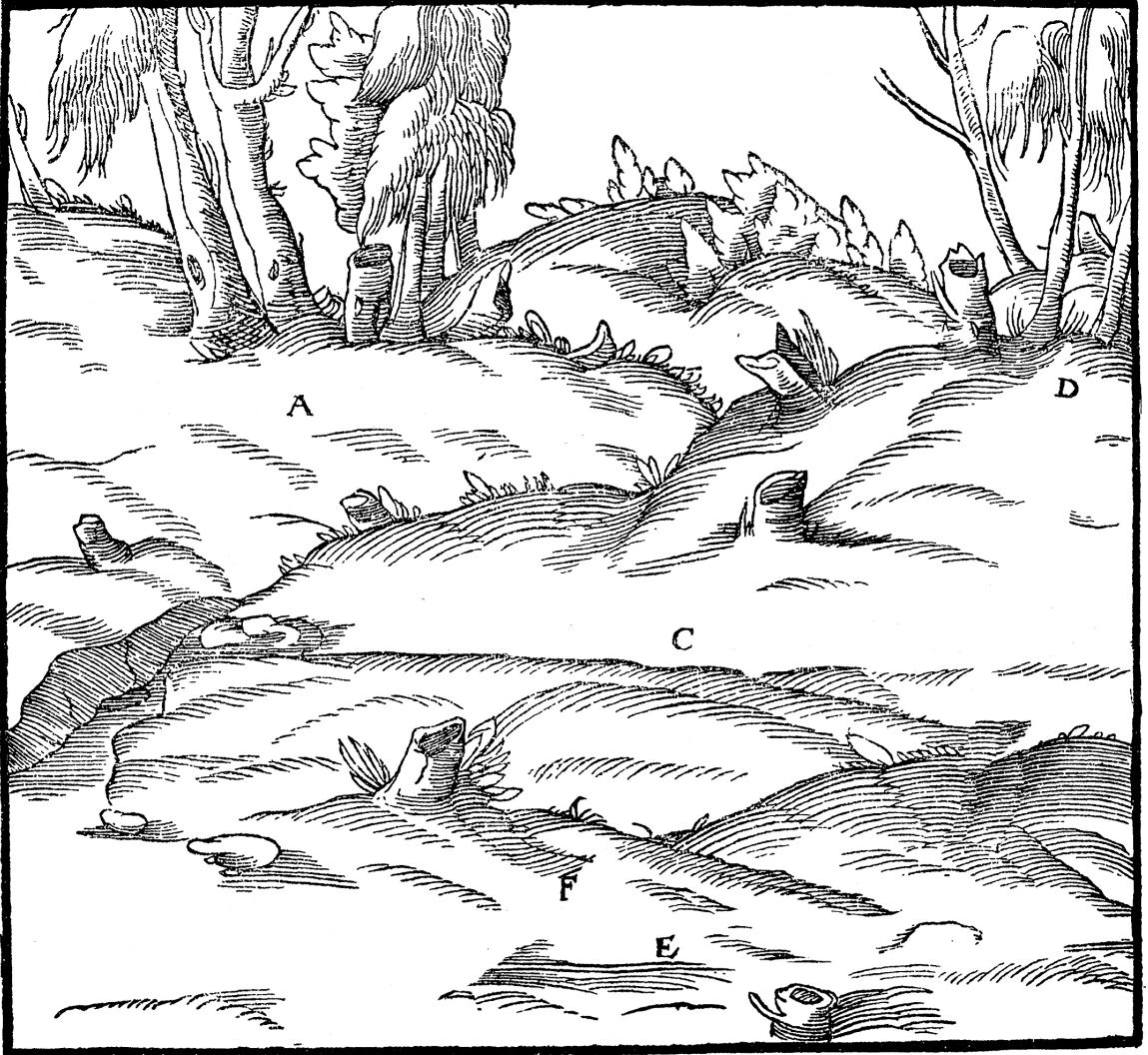
A B C D E F G



A—

B—

C—



A—

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F—

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A— B— C— D—

Meerkats Without History: Digging for a Non-Human Past in the Kalahari Desert

by Benjamin Breen



The truth is, that man is a creature of greater power than other living creatures are ... There be beasts that see better, others that hear better, and others that exceed mankind in all other sense. Man excelleth beasts only in making of rules.

— Thomas Hobbes, *The Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, and Chance* (London, 1656)

IN MY SENIOR YEAR of college, I became mildly obsessed with the television show *Meerkat Manor*. The program billed itself as lighthearted reality TV about a cuddly gang of meerkats trying to get along and find grubs in the harsh environment of the Kalahari Desert. It was the *Real World* meets *Survivor*—only with humans replaced by tiny mongoose-like creatures known mainly for their adorable posture.



The crew of *Meerkat Manor: the Story Begins* observing their subjects in the Kalahari.
Mike Slee

The actual footage and research undergirding the show was surprisingly highbrow. A note at the end of each episode explained that the meerkat group documented in the show was being studied by a University of Cambridge zoological team. These human giants were forever off camera, except for occasional moments when a wayward meerkat happened upon their encampment. In one such encounter, the absurdly small scale of the meerkat was revealed as it stood looking up in mute incomprehension, dwarfed by the leather boots of a bemused English scientist.

Luckily (for American audiences, at least) any threat of didactic content was negated by the fact that the narration came from the guy who plays Sam in *The Lord of the Rings*. For the most part, old Sam stuck to cliffhanger updates like, “The sun is setting, and the danger *seems* to have passed,” or offered a folksy running commentary on the despotic whims of Flower, the tribe’s supreme leader. I was initially sucked in by the escapist soap opera element of the show, which gave every ‘kat a distinctive name (Mozart, Shakespeare, Rocket Dog) and carefully explained their lineages. Almost every meerkat in the group, it turned out, was a direct descendant of Flower, a five-year-old alpha female whose toughness, fecundity, and grim survival skills were unequaled in the rugged stretch of Kalahari that these meerkats called home. My favorite was Flower’s former mate, Yossarion, who the opening credits warned us had “some social problems.” A sinister, Richard III-like figure, Yossarion bore a scar above his left eye that testified to his rare survival of an eagle attack. He’d been dropped on his head from a significant height, and retained a twitchy, crazed unpredictability that made him the show’s obvious villain.

My friends all thought my love for the show was an expression of my soft side, akin to watching videos of sleeping kittens. And it’s certainly true that meerkats are cute. They enjoy group cuddling in their burrow after the workday has drawn to a close, and sometimes they become so overwhelmed by their rapid metabolism that they simply collapse and



The alpha female meerkat of the Whiskers clan, Flower, guarding her grandchildren.
[Wikimedia Commons](#)

start napping. They do that cute standing on their hind legs thing for which they've won international renown. They even engage in complex social behaviors like wrestling matches and clan warfare, and they teach their young learned techniques like how to remove stingers from scorpions. They're neat animals.

In truth, though, I was drawn to the darkness of meerkat life. Beneath the kid-friendly surface, a Shakespearan drama was unfurling in those South African burrows. It was like watching *King Lear* or *Titus Andronicus* acted out by suricates with brains the size of walnuts. When a close friend gave me a sidelong glance after watching an episode and said, "You know what? You're kinda like a meerkat," I took it as a strange sort of compliment, but I had to think about it first.

A typical meerkat inhabits a world of revenge, suffering, and endless toil. The cuddly characters of the show were regularly stung by poisonous asps, lifted off camera in the talons of enormous raptors, or (most common of all) expelled from the group like Old Testament exiles, lost to wander in the desert until they expired from thirst. Even the 'successful' meerkats, the ones permitted by the matriarch to have children and live with the

group, had lives that resembled Victorian factory workers, spending almost all of their waking hours on the tedious dual tasks of lookout duty and grub-hunting. Watching successive generations of meerkittens enter the world in their cozy dugout burrows, play with their siblings for a few days and then get roped into this life of endless labor began to feel less like an excuse to avoid writing my term paper, and more like an exercise in masochism.

Eventually I stopped watching. It was too much. But the show stuck with me as I entered grad school and became an historian, reading works like E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) and anthropologist Eric Wolf's *The People Without History* (1982) that argued for an expansion of the groups surveyed by the historian's gaze. The past was not the sole domain of elite government actors: it was instead collectively made by countless ordinary people who occupied the edges of traditional historical narrative.

On the occasion of our fifth issue, "Digs," I began wondering whether the circle could be expanded further. Complex mammal societies like those of primates, dolphins and even the humble meerkat must give us pause when we think about the

past. The intergenerational dramas of the Kalahari's tiny diggers implicitly pose a question I've been kicking around for years, and don't yet have a good answer to. Do animal societies have histories? And if so—does that make history a hell of a lot darker?



THOMAS HOBBS HELPED set the division between human history and natural history on its current course by investigating what he called “the state of nature.” The philosopher held a dim view of humanity. “Man to Man is an errant Wolfe,” he epigraphed one of his books, and in *Leviathan* he wrote that the “natural condition of mankind” was essentially one of constant warfare, “wherein men live without other security, than what their own strength, and their own invention shall furnish.” Such a life, Hobbes famously concluded, was “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”

Hobbes could just as easily be talking about meerkats. When Yosarrion, the villain of *Meerkat Manor*, is finally expelled from Flower's brood and forced to wander in the desert in search of a mate, he is stripped of his role in meerkat society. Meerkats organize themselves into complex social groupings, with assigned tasks (finding food, guarding infants, and standing on tall objects looking for eagles) that shift on a daily basis. On their own, meerkats quickly succumb to predation. Only by forming what Hobbes called the “Leviathan” of a “civil society,” a well-ordered group with a leader and internal rules, can meerkat bands effectively survive.

Yet any Enlightenment philosopher—indeed, any early modern European person—would've scoffed at my line of argument here. “Animals aren't the slightest bit like us,” I can imagine this seventeenth-century straw man saying. “We were created by an Almighty God in His divine image; God made the beasts to serve us. They may be sentient creatures, but they are not Rational.” Hobbes was an iconoclast, and he didn't hew to the Old Testament party line in this regard. Yet he still believed that humans were naturally superior to all other creatures because of our

use of speech, by which men ... join their forces together, and by which also they register their thoughts that they perish not, but be reserved, and afterwards joined with other thoughts, to produce general rules for the direction of their actions.

In short, the key—indeed the only—human gift is our ability to remember, and to organize and learn from our collective memories. Which, of course, is simply another way of saying “history.”



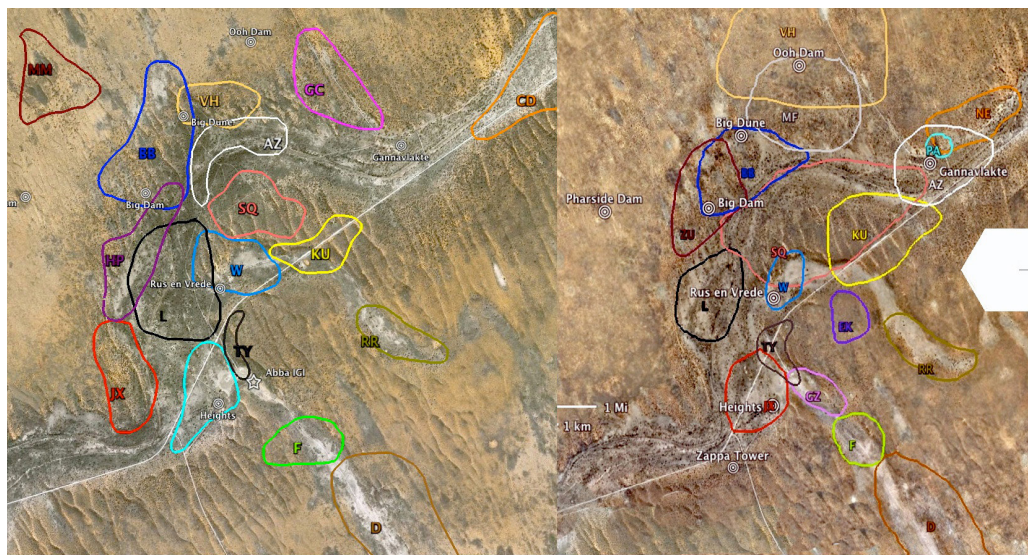
WHEN I WAS A KID, I loved Richard Adams' classic adventure novel *Watership Down*.

Adams modeled his narrative on Virgil's *Aeneid*, inventing a complex society of anthropomorphized rabbits whose idyllic South English burrow is destroyed by construction work. A handful of dazed survivors manage to escape, traveling the countryside in search of a new homeland. The core of the story is Adams's marvelous ability to evoke the mental life of a rabbit (the main characters are terrified by just about everything that doesn't involve leafy greens) while imbuing them with human emotions, thoughts, and even nobility. It's a masterpiece of the animals-as-humans genre that has yet to be equaled, as far as I can tell.

When we narrate animal lives—both in fiction like *Watership Down* or the *Redwall* books or *Finding Nemo*, or in documentaries like *March of the Penguins*—we can't resist the urge to invest them with our own emotions. I'm no less guilty of this than anyone else who writes about animals.

But what happens when we treat animals as actual animals? Can we write historical narratives about

Do animal societies have histories? And if so—does that make history a hell of a lot darker?



Meerkat territories

Winter 2009 (left)
Summer 2011 (right)

Karuman
River Reserve,
South Africa

Copyright: KalahariMeerkats.com

A composite map of meerkat clan territories in 2009 and 2011. Is there a parallel with human societies?
Kalahari-Meerkats.com

non-humans that avoid anthropomorphized emotions, yet treat them respectfully as thinking, sentient beings who share with us a fundamental subjectivity, a sense of themselves as themselves? And if so, what in the world would such a narrative look like?*

Meerkat Manor fascinates me still, because it lays bare the strangeness of how we narrate animal pasts. The show was framed with kooky music, a comforting narrative voice, and a cute name (a more accurate one would be Meerkat Hole in the Ground or Meerkat Endless Terrifying Desert Filled with Scorpions, but those don't have quite the same ring).

In truth, though, the lasting value of *Meerkat Manor* is that it was surprisingly blunt about the brutal lives of its subjects.

I'll never forget the moment when Shakespeare, one of Flower's strongest children, is bitten by a puff adder, causing his leg to swell and become immobile. He's a goner. But, miraculously, Shakespeare's sister finds him twitching in the sand, and drags him back to the burrow they share. She even appears to tend to him, licking his wound and bringing him herbs to nibble on. Shakespeare survives. It's a remarkable moment, and I was genuinely moved by it. But for every story like that, *Meerkat Manor* brought us darker ones, like when

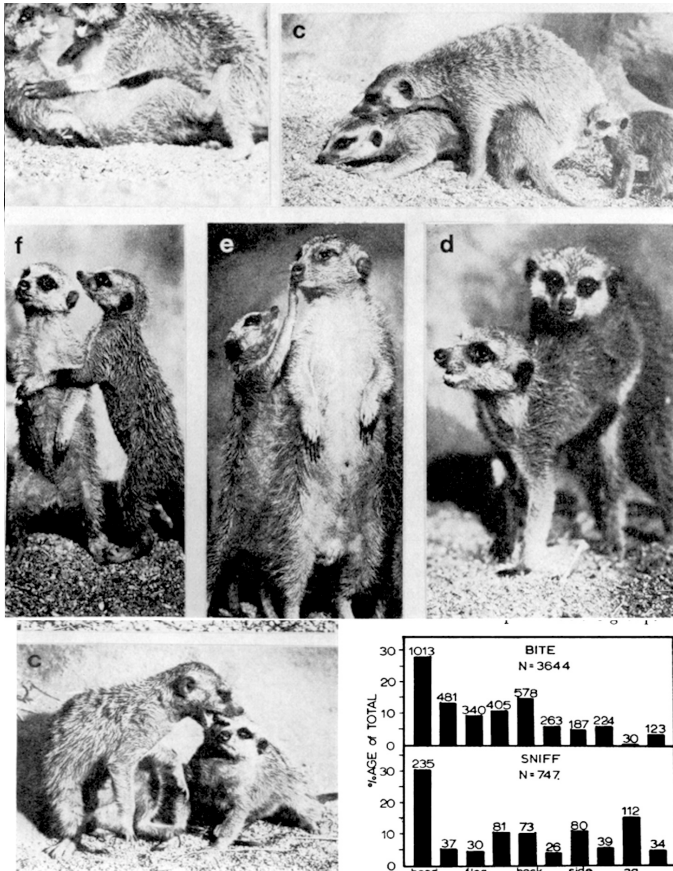
Yossarion, in a moment of derangement, drags his infants out from their burrows and leaves them to die in the sand for reasons unknown to the show's producers, and maybe to Yossarion as well.

The uneasy distance between the stark realism at the show's core and the cute animal trappings that disguised it was widened by the death of the matriarch Flower in 2006. Fatally wounded by a snake, Flower succumbed to venom before the camera's unblinking eye. Viewers were outraged, questioning whether it was ethical for the producers to stand by and watch her death rather than administer anti-venom. The producers rejoined that the goal of the Cambridge meerkat project was to study "the breeding success and survival of individuals and ... the factors that affect reproduction and survival." Intervening in the natural order of things wasn't in their ambit. Indeed, it would be an injustice to the empirical methods and goals that underlay the project: if researchers intervened in meerkat lives, their own scientific efforts would be invalidated.

*But what happens when we treat animals as actual animals? Can we write historical narratives about non-humans that avoid anthropomorphized emotions, yet treat them respectfully as thinking, sentient beings who share with us a fundamental subjectivity, a sense of themselves as themselves? And if so, what in the world would such a narrative look like?

The show *Meerkat Manor* was only an illusory epiphenomenon, an excrescence of cuteness, atop the workings of the Cambridge zoology group that was actually monitoring the individuals involved. And Animal Planet viewers can't mess with Science.

Meerkats are not people, events like this tell us, no matter how many human names we give them. It's fun to imagine their passions, fears, and hopes as if they were characters in an epic novel or a Shakespearian drama. In reality, they're largely creatures of habit acting out genetically encoded behaviors. (One could argue that humans aren't much different, however—we simply play out our genetically encoded behaviors in a way that provides more individual freedom of movement.)



Meerkat social life from the quantitatively-inclined perspective of zoologists, 1974. (Note the graph of bites and sniffs).

C. Wemmer and M. J. Fleming, "Ontogeny of Playful Contact in a Social Mongoose, the Meerkat, *Suricata suricatta*," *American Zoologist* Vol. 14, No. 1 (Winter, 1974)

And yet I firmly believe that meerkats and other higher-order mammals do have a history, of a sort. I'm not talking about the natural history of biologists, which is concerned with their average lifespan, their feeding habits, their reproductive cycles. I mean the history of historians. This type of history, the kind I enjoy doing and reading, is grounded in imaginative leaps that bear a core resemblance to those of the novelist or poet. It's about putting your own experience of the world to one side and trying as hard as you possibly can to imagine someone else's experience. What is it like to live in a meerkat society? On what internal principles do they organize themselves? What do they dream about? When they gather in the desert at night and make high-pitched sounds as a group, are they singing? What is meerkat subjectivity? To paraphrase philosopher Thomas Nagel, what is it like to be a meerkat?

This is a history of animals that has yet to be written. But scientists are increasingly brushing up against its edges, every year making new discoveries about the outer limits of animal intelligence. As it grows ever more clear that non-human brains can experience emotion, remember, dream, and even reason, the need for a new kind of animal history becomes obvious.

Animal history, to be sure, is already a burgeoning field. Many recent works of animal history have been innovative and even brilliant: I'd single out Sam White's "Capitalist Pigs," Virginia De John Anderson's *Creatures of Empire*, Peter Sahlins's work on the menageries of the French Enlightenment, and Donna Haraway on primates. But they continue to chart animal histories only insofar as they influenced human histories. Perhaps there's room now for a type of history that moves smoothly between the natural history of the life sciences and the more individualistic narratives of historians—and between human and animal subjectivities.

Who will write it?

A Much Too Distant Mirror: Against Animal Histories

by Ansel Payne

Am I not a fly like thee? Or art thou not a man like me?

— WILLIAM BLAKE

BACK WHEN I TAUGHT high school in West Virginia, I lived in a \$400-per-month efficiency apartment near an abandoned post office on the banks of the Little Kanawha River. Mine was one of six units in the complex, a cross between a 1970s log cabin and a 1950s motor lodge, and renting it entitled me to the use of all the shared amenities: a great bird watching blind off the back porch, a free power washer for my Volkswagen, and—the pièce de résistance—a lukewarm jacuzzi beneath the grilling patio.



What we really mean when we talk about “animal histories.”

We also shared, in an informal and more or less involuntary sense, the monkeys. In a backstory too long and strange to go into here, our landlord had relinquished his ownership stake in a number of regional strip clubs, gone to prison for tax violations, and left his pet monkeys—a female white-faced (*Cebus capucinus*) and male tufted capuchin (*C. apella*)—in the care of his son, our super. In one version of the story that I later pieced together from my neighbors, the monkeys sometimes hung out in the clubs, traipsing around the light rigs and supplying all the ambience and sophistication of a rum commercial. By the time I moved in, they'd been forced into early retirement, and spent their days stalking back and forth through a long series of connected cages that ran through the garage and out around the hot tub. The female was sweet and quiet, usually too busy eating fruit to notice me, but the male was a constant nightmare of bared teeth and thrusting privates. He was loud, bawdy, and ready, if not downright eager, to bite my finger off. He was, and this is as gently I can put it, kind of a creepy dude.

All that was almost a decade ago, and even now I don't remember that nameless primate sex offender with much fondness; in fact, I don't think of him much at all. But reading an early draft of Ben Breen's article in this issue of *The Appendix* got me thinking about the life that poor creature must have lived, the complete, impenetrable otherness of even our closest relatives, and what we really mean when we talk about “animal histories.”

Strip club monkey, if you're still out there,
this one's for you.



FIRST, SOME REDUCTIO AD ABSURDUM. Do rocks have histories? I don't mean in the geological sense, in which case the answer is clearly yes, but rather in Breen's sense of history as a narrative arc played out by characters with their own motivations, hopes, and fears? Does the story of tectonic subduction have a protagonist? Are there tragic elements in the Rise and Fall of the Appalachian Mountains?*

I would argue, and I suspect most would agree, that the answer is no. Rocks are historical objects in the sense that they change through time, and that those changes may or may not be reconstructed through hypothetico-deductive reasoning, but that doesn't make them historical actors. To paraphrase an old rock song, they don't show, they don't share, they don't need.

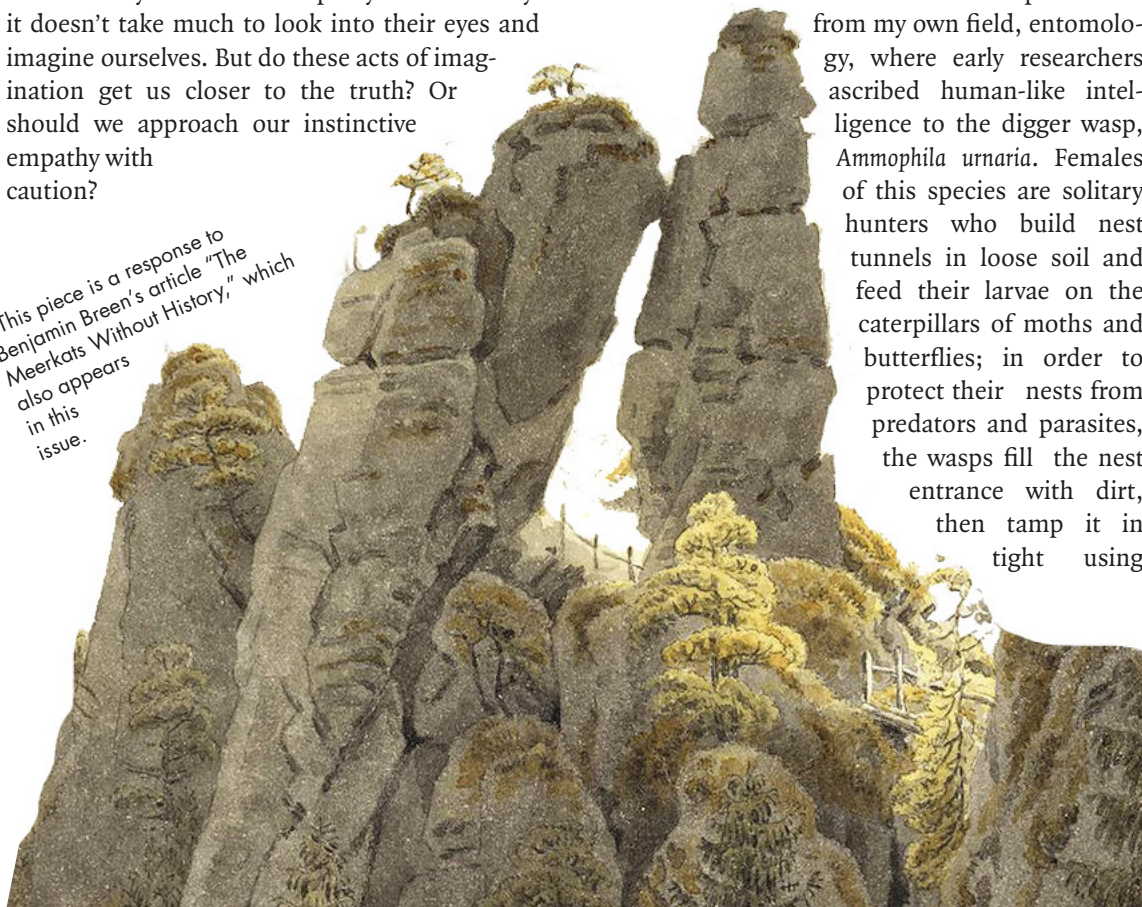
This distinction becomes less clear, however, when we put the same question to animal individuals. Rocks are hard to relate to, but furry creatures with soulful eyes and a familiar inner ear anatomy? Now the empathy comes easily: it doesn't take much to look into their eyes and imagine ourselves. But do these acts of imagination get us closer to the truth? Or should we approach our instinctive empathy with caution?

*This piece is a response to Benjamin Breen's article "The Meerkats Without History," which also appears in this issue.

Biologists who study behavior have been here before. The early twentieth-century movement toward a Darwinian ethology built itself up more or less in explicit opposition to this brand of overt anthropomorphism.

This post-post-Cartesian shift was already underway when Conwy Lloyd Morgan set out his canonical rule, that "in no case is an animal activity to be interpreted as the outcome of a higher psychical faculty, if it can fairly be interpreted in terms of faculties which are lower in the psychological scale." Sure, it may be true that honeybees worry about the oncoming winter and stock up accordingly, but it's much more likely that simple changes in environmental cues trigger transcriptional cascades that in turn lead to changes in foraging behaviors. Since ghosts in the machine aren't necessary to describe most animal behaviors, postulating them is usually neither science nor history, but something more akin to creative writing.

Even among biologists, this lesson took some time to sink in. One of the classic examples comes from my own field, entomology, where early researchers ascribed human-like intelligence to the digger wasp, *Ammophila urnaria*. Females of this species are solitary hunters who build nest tunnels in loose soil and feed their larvae on the caterpillars of moths and butterflies; in order to protect their nests from predators and parasites, the wasps fill the nest entrance with dirt, then tamp it in tight using



a small pebble that they hold between their jaws. Imagine a wasp with a hammer, and you're pretty much there.

The first widely read account of this "tool use" was published by the husband and wife team of George and Elizabeth Peckham in their 1892 book *On the Instincts and Habits of the Solitary Wasps*. To convey a sense of the tone, I have to quote the report at some length:

Just here must be told the story of one little wasp whose individuality stands out in our minds more distinctly than that of any of the others. We remember her as the most fastidious and perfect little worker of the whole season, so nice was she in her adaptation of means to ends, so busy and contented in her labor of love, and so pretty in her pride over her completed work ... When at last, the filling was level with the ground, she brought a quantity of fine grains of dirt to the spot and picking up a small pebble in her mandibles, used it as a hammer in pounding them down with rapid strokes, thus making this spot as hard and firm as the surrounding surface. Before we

could recover from our astonishment at this performance she had dropped her stone and was bringing more earth ... in a moment we saw her pick up the pebble and again pound the earth into place with it, hammering now here and now there until all was level. Once more the whole process was repeated, and the little creature ... intent only on doing her work and doing it well, gave one final, comprehensive glance around and flew away.

Thinking that they had observed a singular event—the extraordinary innovation of a tool by a particularly intelligent individual—the authors jumped to the extreme conclusion that *Ammophila's* intellectual powers were comparable to, or even exceeded, those of the higher mammals. The idea proved so attractive that a figure from the text was widely reproduced in both biology and psychology textbooks throughout the first quarter of the twentieth century, side by side with extended discussions of "wasp intelligence."

And lest you suspect that the Peckhams were writing outside the bounds of the biological mainstream, here's no less a personage than naturalist and essayist John Burroughs, waxing poetic in his introduction to their later book, *Wasps, Social and Solitary* (1905):

[This volume] opens up a world of Lilliput right at our feet, wherein the little people amuse and delight us with their curious human foibles and whimsicalities, and surprise us with their intelligence and individuality... Such a queer little people as [the book] reveals to us, so whimsical, so fickle, so fussy, so forgetful, so wise and yet so foolish... verily a queer little people, with a lot of wild nature about them, and human nature, too.

This kind of thing is preposterous, of course. Wasp "brains" are about as far removed from our own as you can get and still be recognizable as a central nervous system, and subsequent studies of tool-use in wasps have put the old intelligence debate more or less to rest.*

* "It will be seen that there is a gradual progression [across species] from simple packing movements to the actual use of a pebble which is later discarded. At no point do we find evidence of the sudden flash of insight which the Peckhams thought they observed." Howard E. Evans, "Observations on the nesting behavior of digger wasps of the genus *Ammophila*" *The American Midlands Naturalist* 62, no. 2 (1959), 449-473.

It wasn't until mid-century that Frisch, Evans, and others pushed back with a more instinctive explanation based on elaborate "action patterns." Frisch's takedown in particular must surely be one of the more damning criticisms ever published in the august pages of *The American Midlands Naturalist*:

Finally, there is a lingering doubt in my mind as to whether the *Ammophila* of the Peckhams owes her prowess to her spectacular behavior, or rather to a more spectacular description of her behavior. The Peckhams are proclaimed as peerless observers, seeking only the truth and fully aware of the pitfalls of anthropomorphism. Nevertheless... their sentimentality and humanizing tendencies are evident in all their studies; they interpret every action of the wasps in terms of our own conduct, and motivate their actions in terms of our motives... Many of the observations made by the Peckhams were very superficial and led them into wrong conclusions.

John A. Frisch, "Did the Peckhams witness the invention of a tool by *Ammophila urnaria*?" *The American Midlands Naturalist* 24 (1940), 345-350.

The best and most comprehensive review of the behavior can be found in H. Jane Brockmann, "Tool use in digger wasps (Hymenoptera: Sphecinae)" *Psyche* 92, no. 2-3 (1985): 309-330.

Still, the Peckhams' almost manic brand of anthropomorphism lives on in nature documentaries like *Meerkat Manor*, *March of the Penguins*, or, most egregiously, any of the recent confections produced and distributed by the DisneyNature label.

And that, of course, brings us back to Breen's meerkats. Are they real protagonists? Or are we, like turn-of-the-century entomologists, just seeing what we want to see?

IF EVER INDIVIDUAL animals had histories worth telling, surely those mismatched capuchins were worthy of a biopic. Assuming they were born in the wild, they would've spent at least a small part of their lives in their native neotropical forests, sharing their trees with manakins and sloths, and, of course, with the shady pet trade harvesters who brought them north. Captured and sold, they ended up living inside a JT LeRoy short story, swinging from the rafters of a hillbilly gentlemen's club while "Indian Outlaw" blared out across the PA system. We may be able to imagine the scene, but can we imagine their feelings?*

The answer, unfortunately, is no, at least not honestly. While I suspect that most apes and monkeys share with us certain aspects of interiority, subjective experience, maybe even some form of hopes and dreams and fears, the differences between our species are very real, as any serious primatologist will tell you; while these animals may have "souls" of a sort, they must be of a distinctly different flavor than ours. To ascribe our own motivations, our own interior feelings—our stories of revenge and passion and purpose—to

*Most of the country's *Cebus* pets were ostensibly bred in captivity and are kept legally; at present, nineteen states outlaw ownership outright, and various restrictions are in place in thirteen others. West Virginia currently places no restrictions on private monkey ownership. Since 1975, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has banned the importation of all non-human primates for purposes other than scientific research or education; however, the illegal pet trade continues to present major problems for worldwide conservation efforts.

Are we,
like turn-of-the-century
entomologists,
just seeing what
we want to see?



The meerkat, *Suricata suricatta*: historical actor or historical object?
Wikimedia Commons



Ammophila urnaria, thinking it over. From the Peckhams' *On the Instincts and Habits of the Solitary Wasps* (1892).
Internet Archive

primates with different brains and different evolutionary histories is a supremely hubristic thing to do. And if we can't really know our closest relatives, how can we expect to relate to meerkats, separated from us by more than 75 million years of divergent evolution?

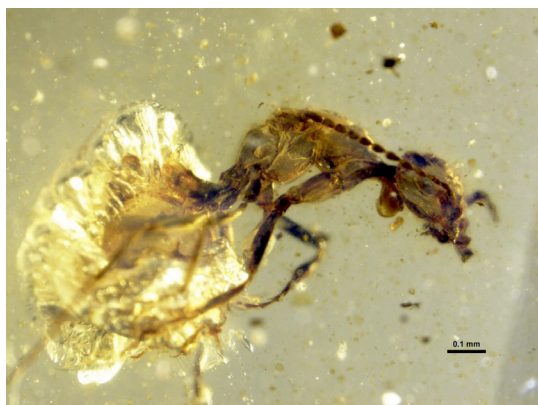
So where do we go from here? Are the only animal histories worth talking about the kind evolutionary biologists study, histories that treat individual animals, their genomes, and their characteristics the way we treat rocks, as mere historical objects? These will never be the stories of plucky individuals beating the Darwinian odds, of Shakespearean schemers at loose on the African plains. Instead, they're absurdist tales of rising mountains and crumbling species groups, of lineages doomed, of gene motifs that carry on, tangling and duplicating across billions of blind generations. And their defining characteristic, the source of their simultaneous attraction and repulsion? Their sheer, discomfiting inhumanity.

I sometimes think of the historical sciences—geology, evolutionary biology, certain branches of astrophysics—as analogous to trying to reconstruct a complicated “night before” with a drunk in a bar. In this case, nature's the drunk: It knows what happened, but it's sure as hell not going to give it to you straight. The big difference is that you can at least relate to a drunk. Nature is a dark narrator, an artist of indifference, Cormac McCarthy on a cosmic scale. When the stories it tells don't fit easily onto a narrative storyboard, we force them, willfully blind to inconvenient truths about our fellow animals, their nature, their mysteries.

Please do keep that in mind if Disneynature decides to make a film about digger wasps and the challenges of being a single mother.



THAT THIS HOBBSIAN universe gave rise to humans—troubled, but well-meaning children desperate for a bedtime story—may not be a miracle, but it's still a remarkable thing. It may well be the case that language, narrative, and imagination are our major evolutionary discoveries. If so, then what a strange gift: eyes to see,



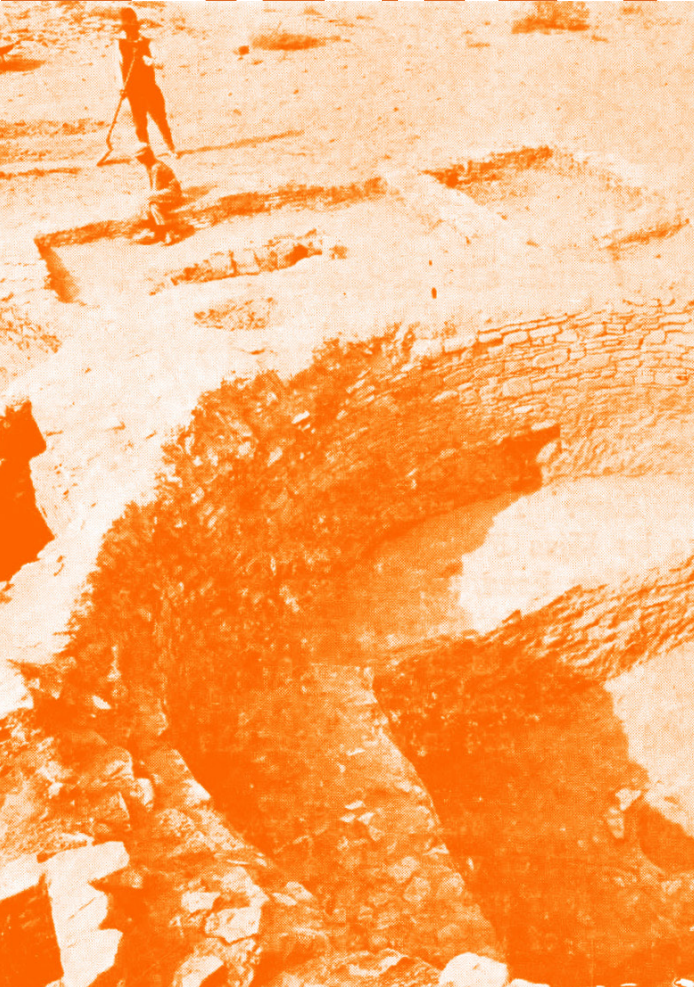
Absurdist tales of lineages doomed: An approximately 99-million-year-old extinct ant species (*Zigrasimecia tonsora*), trapped in amber. Depressing stories like these are nature's specialty.
Phillip Barden/Antweb.org

voices to speak, and souls to hear the stories of our species.

At the end of the day, shows like *Meerkat Manor* or *March of the Penguins* are delightful, but they're also a trap. They promise us a connection, but give us no more hint of their subjects' interior lives than *The Jersey Shore* did for JWoww, Ronnie, or Snookie. Clever editing may cover a multitude of sins, but it's not a gateway to empirical knowledge, and as often as not it's downright disrespectful, both to the animals and to the scientists who study them. While I don't think Breen is advocating that we take those shows seriously, I'm not sure I see how any “animal history” can escape their fundamental flaw: the projection of our own personalities onto the unknowable animal mind.

What is it like to be a meerkat? I'm afraid I have to side with Montaigne on this one.

Que sais-je?



When the Jazz Age Met the Pre-Columbian

FOR OVER TWO HUNDRED years, from about 900 CE to 1150 CE, the Pueblo people made their home in Chaco Canyon, making it the most impressive pre-Columbian settlement in North America. They built beautiful, expansive ‘mansions,’ apartments, and sacred kivas until drought forced their migration. The ruins’ ‘discovery’ in the nineteenth century launched years of fascination and study at the site. From 1929 to 1937, the School of American Research and the University of New Mexico hosted a summer field school there that was revolutionary for its time: Edgar Lee Hewett, the field school’s founder, lobbied for the inclusion of women. Many of those women—Bertha Dutton, Florence Hawley Ellis, Florence Lister, Anna

Sheppard—went on to pioneering professional careers. Their adventures at Chaco Canyon were lastingly chronicled in a weekly newsletter called *Digs*.

When *The Appendix* learned of *Digs* from Erika Bsumek, one of this issue’s contributors, we knew we had to feature it for our own ‘Digs.’ Dry but crunchy, like a martini stirred with a pickaxe, *Digs* was edited by a student named Winifred Stamm, and is a wonderful document of its moment, when a group of college co-eds left the Jazz Age each summer to venture into the Pre-Columbian. They diary, they tease, they compose doggerel odes to the dust around them. They talk about dressing the part (ban-

danas were all the rage). They make fun of their fellow male students' visiting sweethearts, the "cool pink-and-white summer girls." They have fun.

Digs also documents the students' relationships to the Navajo laborers who helped excavate the site. There was mutual fascination, and perhaps a little bit of anxiety. While the students dug in the dirt, the Navajo dug at the students, "worming information out of [them] by slow degrees." The Navajo shared songs, and told stories, and the students attended their Fourth of July celebration at the Chaco Trading Post. (That night the female archaeologists were woken by a "Bang! Bang! Bang!" Had it been a "a Navajo uprising?" No, Stamm explained: just the white boys of the camp being white boys, letting off firecrackers.) For their part, the female students studied how the Navajo women looked, dressed, and acted, the "loops of turquoise" in their ears, their voluminous skirts, their strings of beads. Sometimes they learned those women's names, and were sympathetic, but the unfortunately frequent impression the white women leave is that their Navajo counterparts were exotically dressed "daughters of nature," whose clothes were prêt a porter.

Whether it's so far from there to the "Navajo Hipster Panty" American Apparel was forced to stop selling in 2011, we'll leave up to you.



[WINIFRED STAMM, EDITOR
No. 3 CHACO CANON, N. M., JULY 13, 1929]

COLORFUL FOURTH BY NAVAHOS

Loud was the noise and great the confusion when four hundred Navahos rode into Smith's store in Chaco canyon for a monstrous celebration on the Fourth of July. From all directions they came, in cars and wagons and on horseback. With children and wives and dogs - and without. Dressed in their best hats and jewelry. Such jewelry! Turquoise and more turquoise and a lot of silver. Necklaces so heavy that they burdened their weavers. Bracelets three and four inches wide - and tiny little slim ones weighted with stones. Rings in an infinity of sizes and shapes. Neckerchiefs whose colors hurt the eyes. Velvet and plush jackets. Purple and red and green. Long, long skirts swishing through the dust and big concho belts holding up dirty jeans.



THE ANTI-RAIN DANCE

The excitement started late Wednesday evening. All day they had been coming in small lots. They would pull up to the store with a flourish, climb out and join the multitude within. After due meditation and consideration they would accost Mr. Smith and request tomatoes. Mr. Smith would open a can, dump in a lot of sugar, supply a spoon, and the Navaho would sit down and devour the can. When he had finished, he would return the spoon - first carefully wiping it on his overalls - and go back to his wagon or pony and drive down the arroya to make camp. By eight o'clock the canyon - particularly in the vicinity of the store - was crowded and noisy with children and dogs and bleating goats and fires burned everywhere along the cliff. When the students of the field camp across the canyon drove over after lecture, the store was so crowded with people eating tomatoes or just standing, not conversing, but occasionally approaching one another with out-stretched hand and touching fingers, that they couldn't get in. The [sic] were [p. 27] greeted by such a deluge of firecrackers from the youngsters that they soon beat a retreat to the other side of the bridge.

Very early next morning the Navaho camps were astir. Many more had come in during the night, and by nine o'clock their number was estimated at four hundred. They rallied round in front of the store and the powwowing began. A rancher from up the canyon took charge of the day's program and the whole morning was spent in arranging races, making bets, and planning this and that.

Every thing had to be done with seriousness and thoughtfulness and each Navaho considered deeply and long before he committed himself to anything. It was noon before they moved to the race track and the real business of the day began. Practically everyone was on horseback, though there were a few crowded cars, and there were no tourists and very few whites. Mostly Indians in their picturesque costumes sitting still on their ponies waiting for things to begin. Two rather poor races were run off. Here and there two men would be seen squatting together with their stakes between them and when the race was over, one would scoop the booty up. Many bracelets and rings of great value changed hands.

Just before two o'clock when a halt was called for dinner, the women ran a hundred yard dash. Their full skirts billowed out around them and their squash blossom hairdresses flopped and jerked. Their moccasined feet fairly tore over the ground and the finish was neck and neck. The giggling [sic] involved was great.

...

DUST

Bang! Bang! Bang! Through the stillness [sic] of the night. Archaeologists sit up and look startled. A Navaho uprising? Not at all, my children. Just boys who insist upon being boys celebrating the fourth a few hours previously.

It is you know, a rather odd sensation to be waked by a firecracker shot off in your water bucket.

It is also odd sensation to find one's bed filled with shards - or so a young lady who got lost tells us. It is rather cruel of people to fill lost ladies' beds with shards. But is very rude of lost ladies not to be lost at all, but to stroll into camp and greet their doughty rescuers with, "I've had the best time!"

These staircases in the vicinity are bad enough in the day time without having to climb them after dark. On moonlight nights, however ———. Ah well! Boys will be boys, and girls will be girls, and cliffs are very beautiful things when flooded with silver light.

amused lately by the spectacle of Ye Editor entering the office each morning by crawling through a window the size of a porthole. Dr. Hewett carried the key in his pocket to Santa Fe.

Civilization is invading us! You may believe it or not, but an airplane flitted over the canyon last week. Not only flitted, but fluttered and came down low so the passengers could see the ruins. We expected to be bombed every moment.

The Admiral was very rash. He got out in the middle of the campus and fluttered a white shirt. Suppose the thing had come down! Our one excuse for cracking our necks looking at planes when we get back to where they run would have been gone. "I haven't seen one of those for six weeks!" Another good line gone floeey!

White shirts or knickers in camp are more than ever passe. Reconstruction work on the dig has started and the puddles of adobe are huge and sloppy. Woe unto him who shall put temptation before his brethern!

Next camp we have we are going to make it a rule that commissary managers can't import their sweethearts. At least not if those sweethearts are going to be cool pink-and-white summer girls. It is cruel and inhuman treatment to so remind us of the days when we too have worn white linen and Spanish heels and had waves in our hair.

Will we ever see a marcel again, do you suppose? Will we ever recapture those school girl complexions? And those haircuts that the young Reiter brought out from town didn't fit at all, at all. Our men are beginning to look like poets and musicians.

The population of Chaco canyon has been greatly [p. 32] amused lately by the spectacle of Ye Editor entering the office each morning by crawling through a window the size of a porthole. Dr. Hewett carried the key in his pocket to Santa Fe.

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...

DUST

THE SONG OF THE EXCAVATORS

I think I am a prairie dog,
That's going down to China.
I think I am an angle worm
That's learning how to dig.
Perhaps I am a gopher
That's looking for its mother —
But I'm going to run a steam shovel
When I get big

Which masterpiece was composed by Miss Tietjens of University of Wisconsin [sic] as she trowelled the floor of a tunnel.

A steam shovel would have been a big help. This business of raking down a mountain of dirt, hugging it to one's bosom, and backing out of the tunnel, while amusing, isn't quite as effective as it might be.

Besides one always leaves one's trousers behind when one crawls into the tunnel, and one's shirt behind when one crawls out.

...

DIGS

11

That and other things besides, he knows. Garbo has, in fact, turned himself into the camp poet laureat. Of course, we have to sneak into his tent in the dead of night and swipe it to get any of it, but it's good stuff anyhow.

Hot stuff, we might have said very appropriately.

Garbo was wishing the other day that he'd get malaria so he could have chills. "Just think how nice it would be," said he, "to be working in the middle of the big kiva on a prime afternoon and have shivers go up and down your spine."

Mr. Palmer's kind offer of the rooms in Pueblo Bonito for the use of the School has been enthusiastically accepted by a group of students in search of a cool place to nap. Some tourists happened in upon them the other afternoon. "Good gracious," exclaimed one, "Do you sleep in here?" "When we don't get interrupted," politely replied one of the students. "But aren't you afraid of ghosts?" shivered a second tourist. "The spiders are much more active," said the student. "Well I wouldn't like those so very well either, but I sure wouldn't sleep in a place as full of dead Indians as this one."

The students spent fully three minutes trying to convince her that the Indians were so completely and entirely dead that even their graves are lost, but she couldn't see it and went off shaking her head with the look of one who says, "What fools some of these mortals be."

'S a funny world.

Do you suppose Indians as exceedingly dead as the Bonitans could have ghosts still rambling around?

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Basin

by Michele Stepto

THE LARGE, WHITE BASIN Eleuthera washed up in every evening was an ordinary ironstone piece, probably from the late 19th century. A matching pitcher stood next to it on the dressing table, always full of water. When Eleuthera came in, grimy from the day's dig, she poured the water into the basin and bent over to splash it on her face and neck. There was no running water in the cabin. This was her only way of washing off the day's dirt. She was grateful to the landlady for keeping the pitcher full. It was full again in the morning when she woke up, and always as she poured water into the basin she wondered when during the night or early morning the landlady had been in to replenish it. Wonder in the morning and gratitude in the evening—that was how she had begun to think of this job, which had its own rhythm, like any other.



The comings and goings of the landlady weren't the only mystery. The basin itself, with its crazed surface, put her in mind of the demon bowls that had begun to turn up at auction, pilfered from sites all over Iraq. Some of them bore inscriptions in an ancient language, the characters spiraling out to the edge of the bowl, recognizable as incantations that were anathema to household demons, or else as gibberish inscribed by the illiterate potter, who understood the power of writing to frighten away spirits, even when it said nothing at all. When the bowls were overturned and placed at a corner of the house, it was thought that demons would not enter. Sometimes two identical bowls were cemented together, entrapping a particularly dogged spirit. The ironstone basin had no mate, and Eleuthera wondered, did that mean it never had? Or had the mate been lost and the demon loosed in the world? Every dig seemed to come with its own web of such idle thoughts, items that had wandered into her attention from the news or the Internet or the work itself. Of course the basin was a basin, nothing more.

Sometimes she thought of how fortune tellers filled a basin with water and pretended to look into it and tell the future. Sometimes it reminded her of nothing so much as the place where she was currently working, a valley whose aridity had preserved everything that had ever fallen into it. Their headquarters was located a mile or so from the cabin across a rough terrain, dug down into the earth and shielded from the sun by a canvas awning, which floated a foot or so above the valley floor, so that you never saw it until you were on top of it. When she sat at the specimen table looking out from beneath that awning, feeling the slight breeze that came up in the afternoon, she thought of the basin in the cabin with its worn landscape of cracks. And when she bent over the basin at the end of the day, feeling the cool water on her face, she thought of the valley outside and of the relics it had surrendered to them that day. She was used to this pendular movement of the mind as it swung between ideas.

What put it in her mind to take the basin outside and set it on the ground? Perhaps it was that square chip at the center of it, which resembled the square awning that covered their headquarters. Perhaps not. In any case, she forgot it there,

next to her cabin, and drove the jeep to work, and later when she took the basin inside to wash up, she found it now had a leak. The square chip along the bottom was now a decided hole. The water ran out of it before she could bring any of it to her face, wetting the dressing table and spilling onto the floor. The landlady seemed laughably stern when she asked for her help. All the other basins were in use, she told Eleuthera. She would just have to wash up from the pitcher from now on. The cost of the basin would be added to the expedition bill. When Eleuthera explained that she would rather pay for the basin herself, the woman's face instantly took on a crafty look. She named an exorbitant price, and Eleuthera understood she was paying, not just for the basin, but for the privilege of keeping her own folly a secret from the others.

After that, she washed up out of the pitcher at the end of each day. The landlady continued to fill it and even supplied her with a shabby washcloth she might dip into the water, but it was never the same. She missed leaning over the basin of water, thinking about the future or about everything she had seen that day. The mystery of the pitcher, still full each morning, no longer pleased her.

She kept the basin, having paid a small fortune for it, took it with her when she left the dig, and kept it with her when she left the profession. It was useless, absolutely useless, except as a spur to memory. Its crazed surface brought back the landlady's face, the arid valley in which she had kept her row of cabins, the shaded place beneath the awning, dug into the cool ground, where Eleuthera had sat with the others brushing the dirt from the shards of broken things.

Long after the basin had ceased to hold water, she imagined filling it and searching in it for another future.

NOT-SO-FUNNY PAGES

Excerpt:

Bone Sharps, Cowboys, and Thunderlizards: A Tale of Edward Drinker Cope, Othniel Charles Marsh, and the Gilded Age of Paleontology

by Jim Ottaviani, Kevin Cannon,
Zander Cannon, and Shadi Petosky



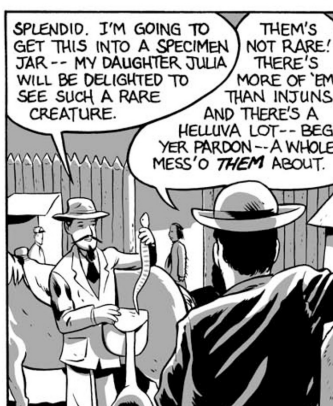
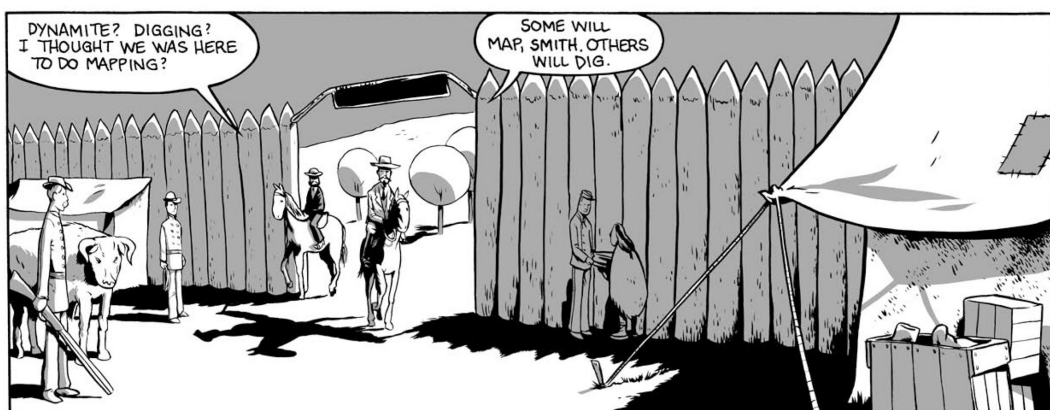
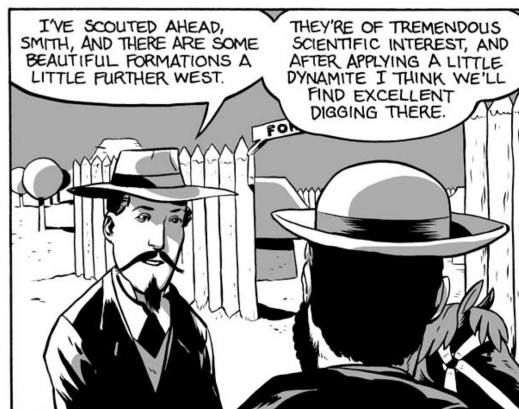
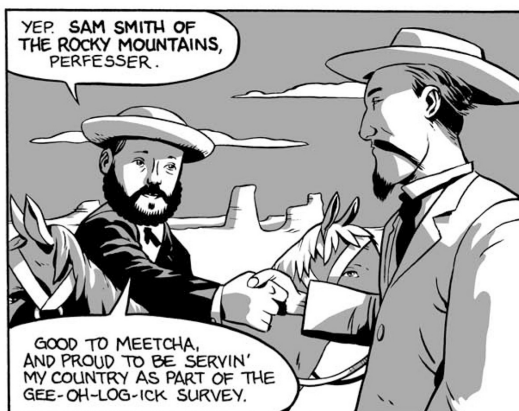
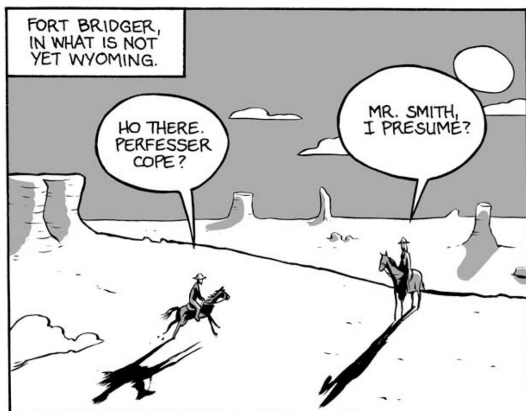
IN OUR SECOND ISSUE, “Illusions,” we were honored to excerpt Jim Ottaviani and Janine Johnston’s *Levitation: Physics and Psychology in the Service of Deception*, a comic book history about the science behind one of the greatest magic tricks ever performed on stage: the levitating woman. In our fourth issue, we featured a romping, cartographic biography by the artist Kevin Cannon about a Danish explorer named Peter Freuchen. And when we remembered that Ottaviani, Cannon, and the other half of the art studio Big Time Attic, Zander Cannon—no relation—had collaborated on a graphic history of paleontological skullduggery and childish competition in the American West, we knew we needed to feature it in “Digs.”

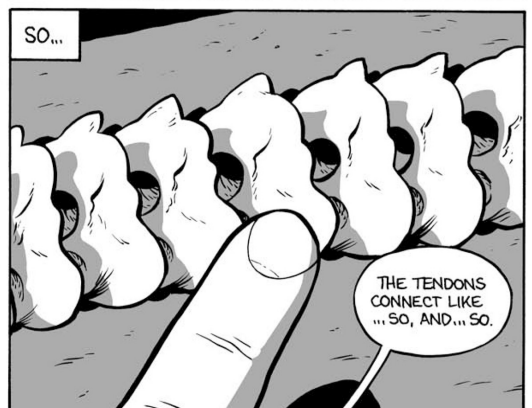
Its name is Bone Sharps, Cowboys, and Thunderlizards: A Tale of Edward Drinker Cope, Othniel Charles Marsh, and the Gilded Age of Paleontology, and, while highly informative, it is also just plain fun, telling the story of how two nineteenth-century field marshals of paleontology—Cope, a romantic Jeffersonian-style collector, and Marsh, a stern establishment man at the Yale Peabody Museum—deployed armies of bonehunters in the American West, each fighting over their own hoard of brontosauri skulls and T-Rex teeth. Fanning the flames of their competition were newspapers like the

New York Herald and participants—sometimes caught in the crossfire—like P. T. Barnum, Wild Bill Cody, the Oglala Sioux Red Cloud, Alexander Graham Bell, and Charles R. Knight, whose art brought dinosaurs to life for the public.

Over a century later, Ottaviani and Big Time Attic brought their story to life to new readers, carefully documenting the details they smudged for the sake of narrative. In the lovely excerpt that follows, the sympathetic Knight gets a lesson in how to breathe warmth into supposedly cold-blooded creatures on paper, and Cope arrives in Wyoming, where the Geological Survey is assisting the collector to gather his dinosauric dead. Afterward Cope gives his own lesson imagining the past, and Marsh gets ready to pull the wool over his eyes.

We hope this brings out the childish paleontologist in all of you.









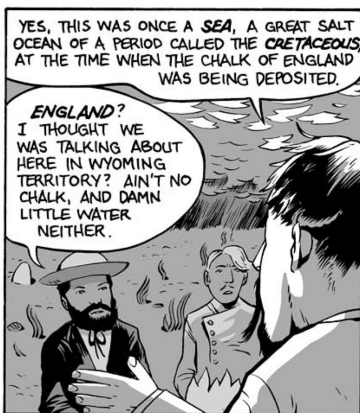
THAT NIGHT...

THESE BONES -- YOU SAY THEY'RE FROM... FROM *DAH-NO-SEWER-UH*? AND THIS IS WHERE THEY WUZ WALKIN' AROUND, THEN?

HA! HA!

DINOSAURIA, MR. SMITH. ANCIENT CREATURES FROM A TIME LONG PAST. AND NOT WALKED, SIR.

SWAM!



YES, THIS WAS ONCE A *SEA*, A GREAT SALT OCEAN OF A PERIOD CALLED THE *CRETACEOUS*, AT THE TIME WHEN THE CHALK OF ENGLAND WAS BEING DEPOSITED.

ENGLAND? I THOUGHT WE WAS TALKING ABOUT HERE IN WYOMING TERRITORY? AIN'T NO CHALK, AND DAMN LITTLE WATER NEITHER.

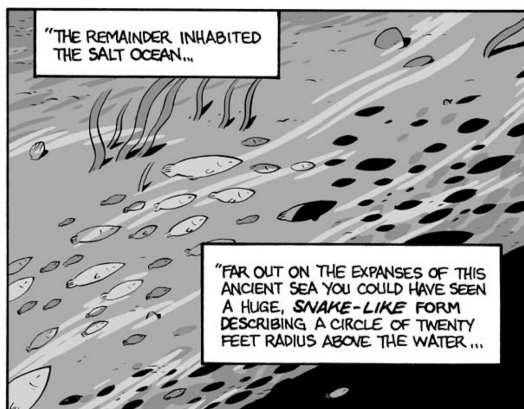


MILLIONS OF YEARS AGO, SMITH.

MANY MILLIONS.

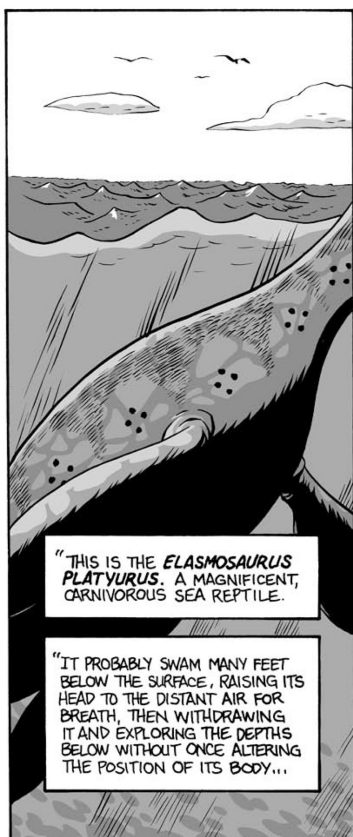


THE OCEAN WAS VAST, SHALLOW, AND MOST FULL OF LIFE... OVER THIRTY-SEVEN SPECIES OF REPTILE -- ONLY ONE TERRESTRIAL, AND FOUR AIRBORNE.



"THE REMAINDER INHABITED THE SALT OCEAN..."

"FAR OUT ON THE EXPANSES OF THIS ANCIENT SEA YOU COULD HAVE SEEN A HUGE, *SNAKE-LIKE* FORM DESCRIBING A CIRCLE OF TWENTY FEET RADIUS ABOVE THE WATER..."



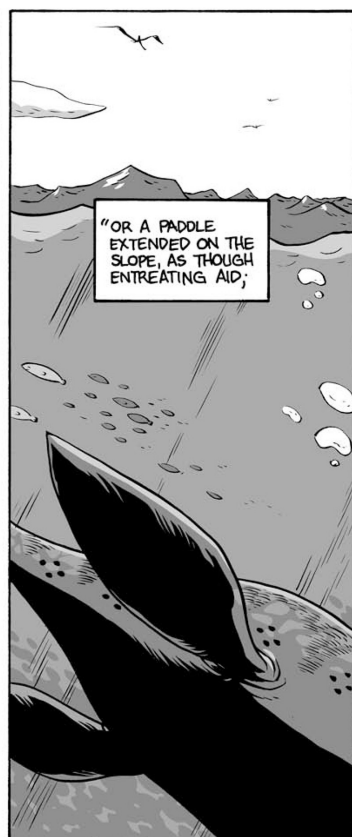
"THIS IS THE *ELASMOSAURUS PLATYRUS*. A MAGNIFICENT, CARNIVOROUS SEA REPTILE.

"IT PROBABLY SWAM MANY FEET BELOW THE SURFACE, RAISING ITS HEAD TO THE DISTANT AIR FOR BREATH, THEN WITHDRAWING IT AND EXPLORING THE DEPTHS BELOW WITHOUT ONCE ALTERING THE POSITION OF ITS BODY..."

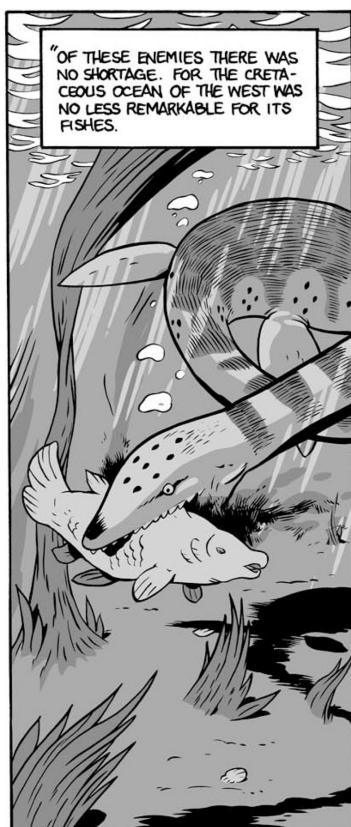


"UNTIL, LIKE ALL LIVING THINGS, IT TOO SUCCUMBED TO TIME AND TIDE.

"TODAY WE FIND HIS VERTEBRAL COLUMN RUNNING FAR INTO THE LIMESTONE THAT LOCKS HIM IN HIS LAST PRISON;"



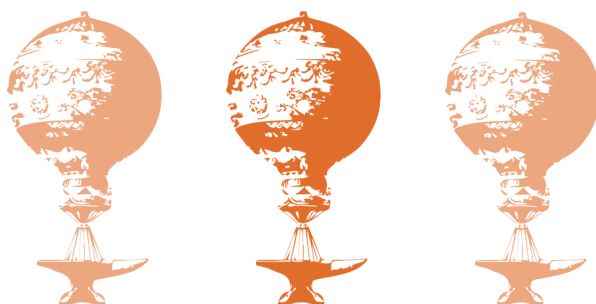
"OR A PADDLE EXTENDED ON THE SLOPE, AS THOUGH ENTREATING AID;"





CHAPTER 2:

Digging in the Archives





Letters to the Editors: Digs

WELCOME AGAIN TO The Appendix letters page, where we offer correspondence from the past.

Our fifth issue, “Digs,” excavates the varying meanings of the word, from holes in the ground to digging in archives, and from nice digs (homes) to mean ones (insults). To complement the theme, we uncovered historical letters to the editor on subjects ranging from a tiny but “perfectly formed frog” miraculously imprisoned in a piece of coal to the science of the grass rings where fairies reside.

As always, we hope they inspire you to write letters of your own—to The Appendix and to parties deserving and otherwise.—The Editors



“Fairy Rings,” *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction*, May 10, 1834.”

(To the editor).

The natural origin of these “green sour ringlets,” respecting which the most remarkable legends in the annals of fairy land refer, has long been a matter of controversy. Some have absurdly supposed that they were caused by moles; others that they were the effect of lightning.

VYVYAN

[No address given]



“A Mummified Frog,” *Science*, September 24, 1886.

One of the most curious finds unearthed lately in this region, and what may yet prove a valuable fact

in the study of science and history, was singularly found by Eddie Marsh, the fourteen-year-old son of Mr. D. B. Marsh, a book-keeper for Stevenson Brothers hardware dealers.



Eddie, becoming impatient at the fire in the stove, which was not burning vigorously, took the poker and began punching it. A large lump of coal lay smoldering, and he determined to break it; and after punching it for a moment, the lump burst open as if in an explosion, and a number of pieces flew out of the stove. One piece he caught, and its lightness attracted his attention.

On viewing it, he saw that it was nothing less than a perfectly formed frog. It had been embedded in the centre of the large lump of coal.

Now various and tough questions arise regarding it. How did it get so far underground? How did it become embedded in that chunk of coal, which probably had been blasted from the centre of a thick vein? How many thousands of years had it been buried?

R. W. Shufeldt

Fort Wingate, New Mexico, September 14



“News Notes,” Digs, August 17, 1929.

This really is a good camp, in spite of the damp—and the puns! Oh those puns! With coffee and without. The one about the “s’noran zone” was the worst. But we know it isn’t confined to Pullman, in spite of what Mr. Hodge says. Just let him stroll past the big tent on the hill after ten o’clock some night—most any night will do—and he’ll realize that Dr. Cowles is right. Battleship Rock is located in the Upper S’noran Zone and can even offer a few specimens of Lower S’noran types.

All of which has nothing whatever to do with the present price of matches. Let’s get down to business and talk about the dig. And skeletons. And all the rest of the this and that’s connected with bone digging. Let us sit back on our heels and chortle a bit that we may sit on a wheelbarrow and sort shards while the bugologists from the slums traipse around the country.

They may call us bone diggers and what not if they like, but they have to admit WE BROUGHT THE COOK!

Winifred Stamm
Jemez Springs, NM



“LIFE in a Capsule,” *LIFE*, October 10, 1938.

Sirs:

We take pleasure in informing you that the May 23 issue of *LIFE*, in microfilm, will be included in the Westinghouse Time Capsule, to be preserved for our posterity of 5,000 years hence.

G. Edward Pendray, Assistant to the President,
Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Co.,
New York

The Westinghouse Time Capsule, a tube of copper alloy, was buried on the grounds of the 1939 New York World’s Fair on Sept. 23 by Westinghouse Board Chairman A. W. Robertson and Fair President Grover Whalen. Archeologists are expected to dig it up in 6939 AD, crack it open and find a complete record of 1939 civilization, preserved on microfilm. Citizens of 6939 who examine the May 23 issue of *LIFE* will find pictures of Adolf Hitler’s visit to Mussolini,

the battle of Taierhchwang in the Chinese War, Hollywood Glamour Boy Errol Flynn and such New York glamour boys as William Rhinelandier Stewart and Jules Glaenzer, Roger Tory Peterson’s paintings of American songbirds in color, and a photographic essay on city planning.—Ed.



“Australian Diggers,” *LIFE*, December 15, 1956.

Sirs:

The article on Melbourne says that “miners, called ‘diggers,’ passed on their nickname to Australian soldiers.” However, others have noted that the nickname resulted from the digging activities of trapped Australian and New Zealand troops on the ridges above Gallipoli.

A request by trapped Anzac Corps to withdraw prompted the operations commander, Sir Ian Hamilton, to reply, “You have to go through the difficult business, now you have only to dig, dig, dig until you are safe.” Dig they did, and ever since, the Australians have proudly borne the name of “diggers.”

Donald J. Proctor, Pasadena, Calif.

FIELD NOTES



Haiti's Declaration of Independence: Digging for Lost Documents in the Archives of the Atlantic World

by Julia Gaffield

ON THE FIRST of January, 1804, Haiti became the second independent nation in the Americas. The Haitian Declaration of Independence was the triumphant culmination of the only successful slave revolution in history. The content of Haiti's Declaration became well-known thanks to transcriptions and later printings, yet all copies of the official government-issued document disappeared from view in the decades following the revolution. Unlike the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America, which has a deep history of symbolic significance as a material object (just ask Nicholas Cage), the physical text of Haiti's Declaration fell into obscurity. By the late nineteenth century, no official copy could be found of the document that introduced Haiti on the world stage and announced a citizenry united as one people: *Haytiens*.^{*}

In 1903, on the eve of Haiti's centennial, the Haitian newspaper *Le Soir* issued calls to the government and to Haitian citizens to help find the original Haitian Declaration of Independence, "the baptismal certificate of the Haitian people." According to the editor of the journal, Justin Lhérisson, the Declaration of Independence was an essential focus for the celebrations and it had to be found as a re-affirmation of 1804's importance.¹

Justin Lhérisson is also the author of the Haitian national anthem, *La Dessalinienne*.

Surprisingly, these early efforts to rediscover the Declaration failed.

"The Haitian Declaration of Independence," *Le Soir* reported on January 28, 1903, "by a culpable negligence, cannot be found in the Archives of the Republic. Some say it was stolen and sold in Germany, others say that it is in England." The next day, *Le Soir* printed a letter from "a longtime subscriber" that supported the newspaper's calls for the Haitian government and Haitian citizens to search for the original Haitian Declaration of

Independence. The letter suggested that someone had sold the document to a German in the 1860s and that the German had then donated it to a German museum. Although no evidence was presented to support this claim, it seemed entirely possible since German immigrants arrived in Haiti in significant numbers in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Three years after the centennial anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the Declaration itself remained lost. The Secretary of the Legation of Haiti in London, Félix Viard, wrote to Lhérisson asking for guidance in his continued quest to find the document. Viard was certain that it was not at the British Museum since he had searched the museum's "department of historical documents and famous autographs." In looking for a document signed by Jean-Jacques Dessalines and the other leading Haitian generals, Viard mentioned that if he found the document, which he argued would "be more in its place in our National Archives," he would photograph it with "50x60 plates." Viard noted that he would send any such images to the "President of Haiti, who would surely display it in his palace."²

The mystery of the Declaration's disappearance deepened with each passing decade. Close to fifty years later, in anticipation of sesquicentennial celebrations, Haitians were still looking for an original copy. On December 31, 1952, the Haitian intellectual Edmond Mangonès wrote to The Haitian Commission of Social Sciences for the 150th Anniversary of Independence to report the results of his search to find an original copy of the Declaration of Independence. "All searches to date have been in vain," he wrote. Mangonès knew about the efforts of earlier researchers but reported that no one had been able to find "the original Declaration or even a signed copy or a printed version from the time." Mangonès remained hopeful, however, that a printed copy might exist, since the famous Haitian historian Beaubrun Ardouin noted that "all the documents published at Gonaïves" were "printed ... and sent to all of the secondary officials and occasioned public festivals."

Mangonès attributed the disappearance of the original Haitian Declaration of Independence to "the ostracism that struck Dessalines during 39

^{*}According to David Armitage, the symbolic value of the American Declaration of Independence did not develop immediately: "For almost four decades after 1776, Americans valued the successful fact of that independence more than they did the specific document that had declared it. It was only in the last decade of Jefferson's life that the Declaration began to be seen as the well-founded article of 'American scripture' celebrated by Americans every Fourth of July then and since.

years—from 17 October 1806 [the date of his assassination] to 10 December 1845, the date that President Pierrot used the law that recognized the services rendered to the Nation by the Emperor [Dessalines] to rehabilitate his memory.” President Louis Pierrot was, in the words of historian Erin Zavitz, a “nationalist and *noiriste* black general,” who had “decreed a national funeral service for Dessalines on 17 October.” Despite this rehabilitation of Dessalines’s memory in the mid-nineteenth century, Mangonès lamented that “we do not have a copy nor even a printed text of our Declaration of Independence that was consecrated by a verbal proclamation.” Mangonès was frustrated by the haphazardness of his research and regretted that the government had not taken a more active role in commissioning archival research. He also called for a broader exploratory research mission that would try to remedy the fact that Haiti’s important historical documents were scattered throughout the country and in foreign archives.



OVER TWO CENTURIES had passed since Haitian leaders had proclaimed the Declaration of Independence when I set out to write my dissertation at Duke University on the early independence period.

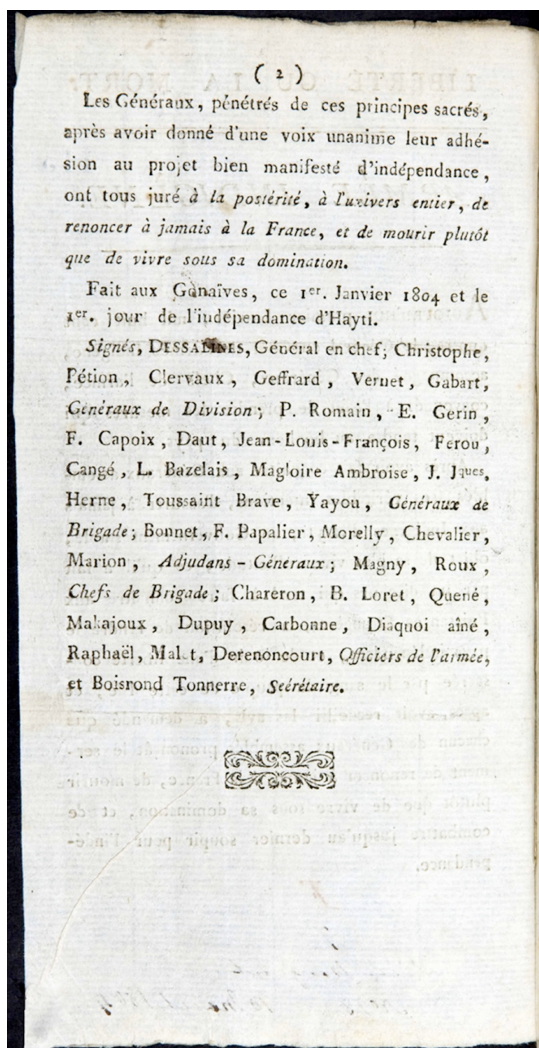
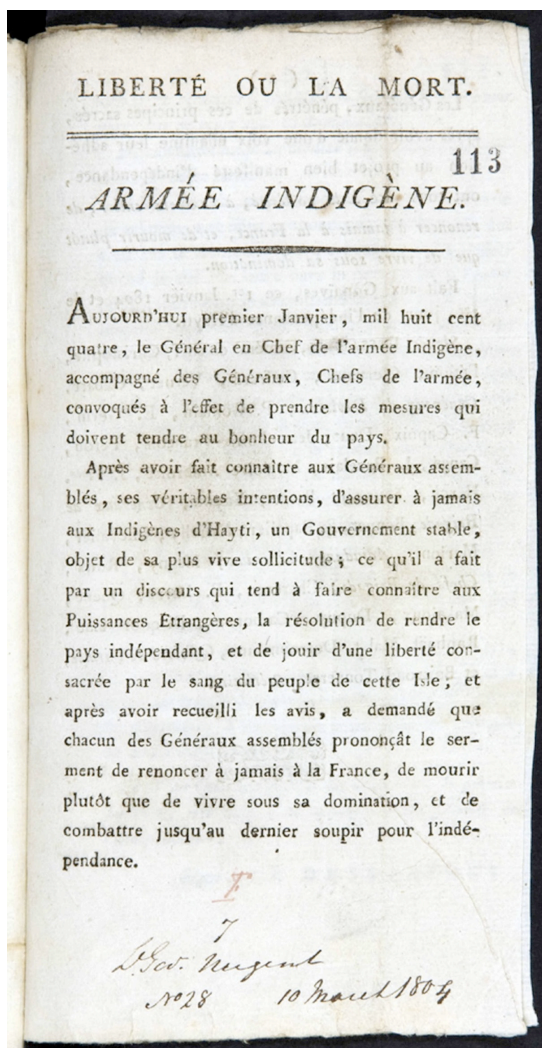
At first, I was confronted by countless specialists who cautioned me, “but, there aren’t any sources.” Fortunately, my advisor Laurent Dubois supported my project despite the alleged paucity of sources about the tumultuous decades after the Haitian Declaration of Independence. It is widely known that texts from the earlier period of the Haitian Revolution can be found in French archives but, as implied in the newspaper’s comment about “negligence,” the Haitian state did not have an official archive until the mid-nineteenth century. Other factors, such as natural disasters, under-funded institutions, political turmoil, and theft have also worked against the proper curation of official archives in Haiti. Nonetheless, a number of repositories have maintained important parts of Haiti’s archival record. The *Archives Nationales d’Haïti* (est. 1860), the *Bibliothèque Nationale d’Haïti* (est. 1939), the *Bibliothèque Haïtienne des Pères du Saint-Esprit* (est. 1873), the *Bibliothèque Haïtienne des Frères de l’Instruc-*

tion Chrétienne (est. 1912), and the *Musée du Panthéon National Haïtien* (MUPANAH) (est. 1983) all have rich archives, although their collections relate mostly to the latter half of the nineteenth century and twentieth century.

I quickly realized, therefore, that I would have to re-think the typical archival strategy for graduate students, in which you spend a year or two in one country reading everything you can get your hands on in the relevant archives and libraries. My study of the early years of Haitian independence could not be based exclusively on research in Haiti.

Instead, I planned for shorter trips to seven different countries—Jamaica, Great Britain, France, the United States, The Netherlands, Denmark, and Haiti—and I found relevant documents in every archive that I visited. I had some luck along the way, but my strategy was part of a larger scholarly shift that emphasizes the interconnectedness of the Atlantic World. Rather than histories divided by nationalities, an increasing number of studies are revealing how the movement of people, goods, and ideas created an integrated Atlantic community. The fact that Haitian documents ended up in archives in many countries makes complete sense from this Atlantic World perspective on Haiti’s history.

The Haitian Revolution involved armies from the French, British, and Spanish Empires as well as armies of slaves and former slaves and free non-white colonial residents. Alliances changed throughout the war, but it was an international affair from the very beginning. Participants in the war as well as onlookers had a vested interest in the success of one or more of the many sides of the fight so they collected and shared news about the Revolution. Furthermore, the Revolution led to the migration of thousands of people from Saint Domingue (Haiti’s colonial name) to other colonies, the United States, and Europe. Because of this, I have found that sources relating to the Haitian Revolution are not only held in French archives, but are scattered (though not randomly) throughout Europe and the Americas. International interest and involvement in Haiti did not stop after Declaration of Independence.



The Haitian Declaration of Independence, printed at Port-au-Prince in 1804.
The National Archives of the United Kingdom

My first international research trip was to Kingston, Jamaica, inspired by what the famous Haitian historian Thomas Madiou wrote about a treaty negotiation between Governor-General Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Governor George Nugent of Jamaica in early 1804. Since the historiographical emphasis has been on Haitian isolation after independence, the mention of these negotiations sparked my interest. No finding aids were available so I arrived in Kingston with only a hunch about what I might discover in the collections.³

It turns out that luck was on my side. “I almost cried tears of joy in the archives,” I wrote to a friend one day. At the National Library of Jamaica (NLJ), I found three large wooden boxes (maybe 2.5 by 1.5 feet) containing all of the correspon-

dence of Governor Nugent. This correspondence revealed that in the months leading up to and after the Haitian Declaration of Independence, Nugent had sent emissaries to Saint Domingue/Haiti to try to negotiate a trade treaty with Dessalines. The boxes of documents showed that these negotiations were much more extensive and significant than Madiou had realized. These documents would soon play a central role in helping me solve the mystery that had defied concerted efforts for more than a century.⁴

My research led me to one of Nugent’s agents, Edward Corbet, who brought a copy of the Haitian Declaration of Independence to Jamaica. Corbet had written to Nugent and noted that he was enclosing a printed document. “I now beg leave

LE GÉNÉRAL EN CHEF,
AU PEUPLE D'HAYTI.
CITOYENS,

CE n'est pas assez d'avoir expulsé de votre pays les barbares qui l'ont ensanglanté depuis deux siècles; ce n'est pas assez d'avoir mis un frein aux factions toujours renaissantes qui se jouaient tour-à-tour du fantôme de liberté que la France exposait à vos yeux; il faut par un dernier acte d'autorité nationale, assurer à jamais l'empire de la liberté dans le pays qui nous a vu naître; il faut ravir au gouvernement inhumain qui tient depuis long-tems nos esprits dans la torpeur la plus humiliante, tout espoir de nous réasservir; il faut enfin vivre indépendans ou mourir.

Indépendance, ou la mort. . . . que ces mots sacrés nous rallient, et qu'ils soient le signal des combats et de notre réunion.

Citoyens, mes Compatriotes, j'ai rassemblé dans ce jour solennel ces militaires courageux, qui, à la veille de recueillir les derniers soupirs de la liberté, ont prodigué leur sang pour la sauver; ces Généraux qui ont guidé vos efforts contre la tyrannie, n'ont point encore assez fait pour votre bonheur. . . . le nom français lugubre encore nos contrées.

Tout y retrace le souvenir des cruautés de ce peuple barbare; nos lois, nos mœurs, nos villes, tout encore porte l'empreinte française; que dis-je, il existe des français dans notre Isle, et vous vous croyez libres et indépendans de cette République qui a combattu toutes les nations, il est

(4)

vrai; mais qui n'a jamais vaincu celles qui ont voulu être libres.

Eh quoi! victimes pendant quatorze ans de notre crédulité et de notre indulgence; vaincus, non par des armées françaises, mais par la pipeuse éloquence des proclamations de leurs agens; quand nous lasse-rons-nous de respirer le même air qu'eux? Qu'avons-nous de commun avec ce peuple bour-reau? Sa cruauté comparée à notre patiente modé-ration; sa couleur à la nôtre, l'étendue des mers, qui nous séparent, notre climat vengeur nous disent assez qu'ils ne sont pas nos frères, qu'ils ne le deviendront jamais, et que s'ils trouvent un asile parmi nous, ils seront encore les machina- teurs de nos troubles et de nos divisions.

Citoyens Indigènes, hommes, femmes, filles et enfans, portés vos regards sur toutes les parties de cette Isle, cherchez-y, vous vos épouses, vous vos maris, vous vos frères, vous vos sœurs; que dis-je, cherchez-y vos enfans, vos enfans à la mamelle? Que sont-ils devenus. . . . Je frémis de le dire. . . . la proie de ces vautours. Au lieu de ces victimes intéressantes, votre oeil consterné n'aperçoit que leurs assassins; que les tigres dégouttant encore de leur sang, et dont l'affreuse présence vous reproche votre insensibilité et votre coupable lenteur à les venger. Quattendez-vous pour apaiser leurs mânes; songez que vous avez voulu que vos restes reposassent auprès de ceux de vos pères, quand vous avez chassé la tyrannie; des- cendrez-vous dans leurs tombes, sans les avoir vengés? Non, leurs ossemens repousser ient les vôtres.

The Haitian Declaration of Independence, printed at Port-au-Prince in 1804.
The National Archives of the United Kingdom

to lay before your Excellency," he explained after returning from Haiti, "their declaration of Inde- pendence. This piece wherever it may have been composed, was not published 'till after my arrival at Port au Prince, for the Copy I have now the hon- or of presenting to you had not been an hour from the press." This document proved to be highly sig- nificant, although not immediately. In the archi- val boxes, I did find a handwritten transcription of the Haitian Declaration of Independence. How- ever, given the fact that other handwritten and printed versions exist in several repositories, the document itself was not an important discovery for early Haitian history.

What had happened to the Declaration of Inde-

pendence that "had not been an hour from the press"? In reflecting on this question, I discussed the possibilities with one of my dissertation committee members, Deborah Jenson, who had earlier researched the publication of the Haitian Declaration of Independence in American news- papers. We concluded that Corbet must have been referring to a printed document and not to the handwritten transcription that I found at the NLJ; therefore something must have happened to the official copy that Corbet noted as having just ar- rived from "the press."

The success of my research trip to Jamaica fuelled my suspicion that Haiti's archival record reflected its key role in the larger Atlantic World. The next

Et vous hommes précieux, Généraux intrépides qui, insensibles à vos propres malheurs, avez résuscité la liberté en lui prodiguant tout votre sang; sachez que vous n'avez rien fait, si vous ne donnez aux nations un exemple terrible, mais juste, de la vengeance que doit exercer un peuple fier d'avoir recouvré sa liberté, et jaloux de la maintenir; effrayons tous ceux qui oseraient tenter de nous la ravir encore: commençons par les français..... Qu'ils frémissent en abordant nos côtes, sinon par le souvenir des cruautés qu'ils y ont exercées, au moins par la résolution terrible que nous allons prendre de dévouer à la mort, quiconque né français, souillerait de son pied sacrilège le territoire de la liberté.

Nous avons osé être libres, osons l'être par nous-mêmes et pour nous-mêmes; imitons l'enfant qui grandit: son propre poids brise la lisière qui lui devient inutile et l'entrave dans sa marche. Quel peuple a combattu pour nous! quel peuple voudrait recueillir les fruits de nos travaux? Et quelle déshonorante absurdité que de vaincre pour être esclaves. Esclaves!... laissons aux français cette épithète qualificative; ils ont vaincu pour cesser d'être libres.

Marchons sur d'autres traces, imitons ces peuples qui, portant leurs sollicitudes jusques sur l'avenir et appréhendant de laisser à la postérité l'exemple de la lâcheté, ont préférés être exterminés que rayés du nombre des peuples libres.

Gardons-nous cependant que l'esprit de prosélitisme ne détruise notre ouvrage; laissons en paix respirer nos voisins, qu'ils vivent paisiblement sous l'égide des lois qu'ils se sont faites, et n'allons pas,

boutes-feu révolutionnaires, nous érigeant en législateurs des Antilles, faire consister notre gloire à troubler le repos des Isles qui nous avoisinent; elles n'ont point, comme celles que nous habitons, été arrosées du sang innocent de leurs habitants; ils n'ont point de vengeance à exercer contre l'autorité qui les protège.

Heureuses de n'avoir jamais connu les fléaux qui nous ont détruit; elles ne peuvent que faire des vœux pour notre prospérité.

Paix à nos voisins, mais anathème au nom français, haine éternelle à la France: voilà notre cri.

Indigènes d'Hayti! mon heureuse destinée me réservait à être un jour la sentinelle qui dût veiller à la garde de l'idole à laquelle vous sacrifiez: j'ai veillé, combattu, quelquefois seul; et si j'ai été assez heureux que de remettre en vos mains le dépôt sacré que vous m'avez confié, songez que c'est à vous maintenant à le conserver. En combattant pour votre liberté j'ai travaillé à mon propre bonheur. Avant de la consolider par des lois qui assurent votre libre individualité, vos Chefs, que j'assemble ici, et moi-même nous vous devons la dernière preuve de notre dévouement.

Généraux, et vous Chefs, réunis ici près de moi pour le bonheur de notre pays, le jour est arrivé, ce jour qui doit éterniser notre gloire, notre indépendance.

S'il pouvait exister parmi nous un cœur tiède, qu'il s'éloigne et tremble de prononcer le serment qui doit nous unir.

Jurons à l'univers entier, à la postérité, à nous-

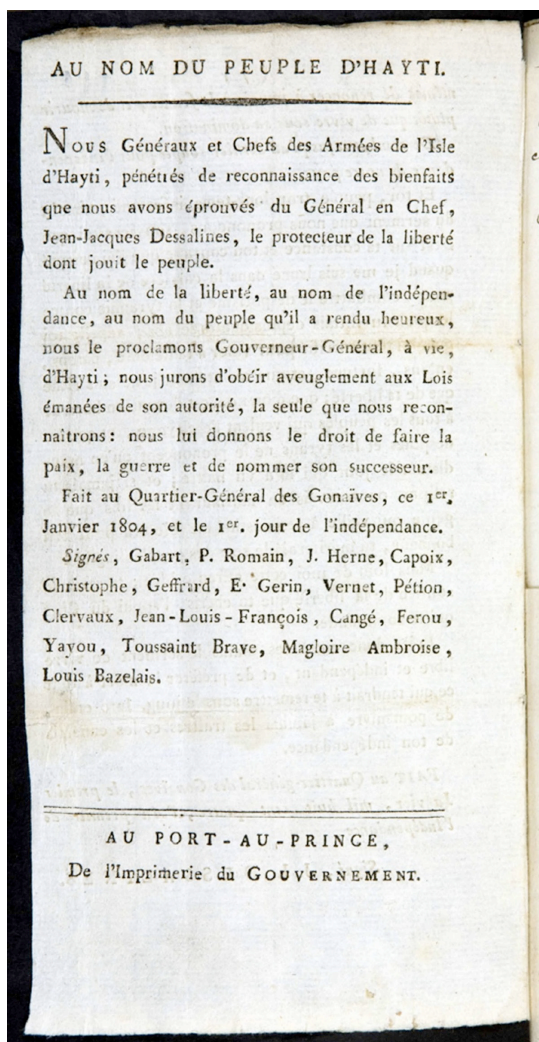
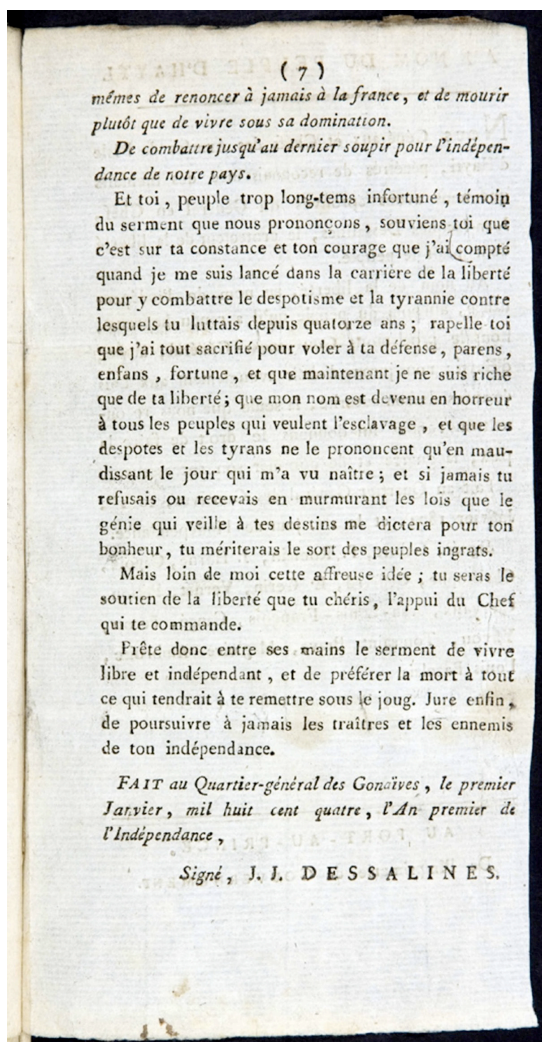
The Haitian Declaration of Independence, printed at Port-au-Prince in 1804.
The National Archives of the United Kingdom

step was to fly to London in search of additional correspondence relating to Nugent and Desalines's negotiations, including mentions of attachments, like the Declaration of Independence, that were not in the boxes at the NLJ. The colonial correspondence at The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA) is first organized by colony and then by chronology. I started my research in the Jamaica series, CO 137. It was not long before I found a packet of printed Haitian documents that Governor Nugent had sent to the British ministers in London on March 10, 1804. "I beg leave to transmit to your Lordship," Nugent wrote to the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, "every paper in my possession, which can tend to throw a light upon the subject."

This packet included a number of new and exciting documents that, if ever studied, had never been used before in published research, such as the only known version of a song titled *Hymne Haïtienne*, composed and sung in January 1804.

But most significantly, and much to my amazement, the packet of documents also included a printed copy of the long-sought Haitian Declaration of Independence, issued by the Government printing press in Port-au-Prince.

The official Declaration of Independence was an eight-page pamphlet with the words *LIBERTÉ OU LA MORT* written boldly across the top of the first page. The format of the document suggests that



The Haitian Declaration of Independence, printed at Port-au-Prince in 1804.
The National Archives of the United Kingdom

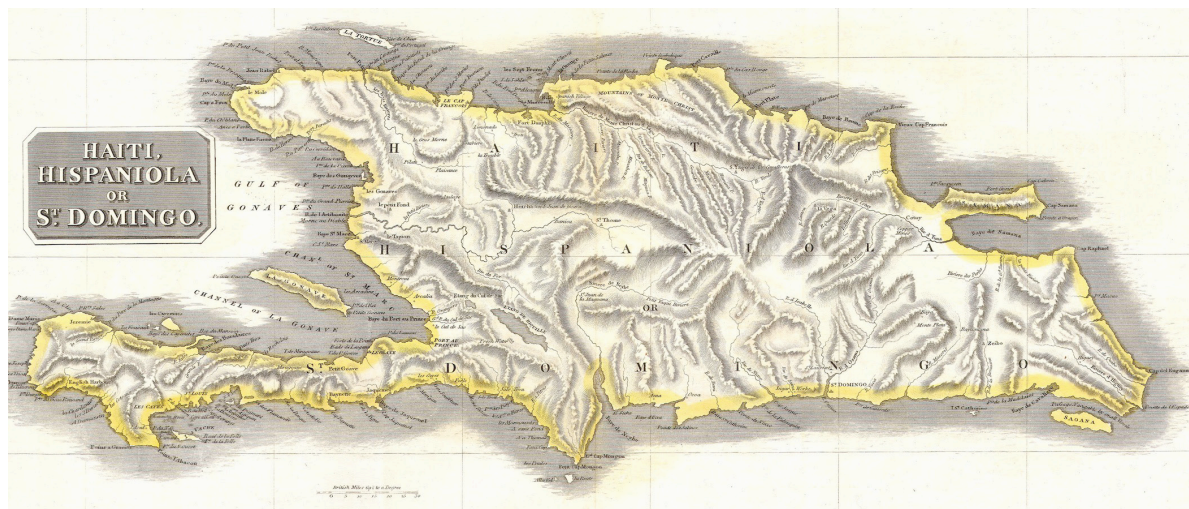
the Haitian government intended to mail it to local and foreign governments. The document is composed of three parts:

- 1) the *Acte de l'Indépendance*
(Declaration of Independence)
- 2) a proclamation by the General in Chief, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, to the people of "Hayti"
- 3) the nomination of Dessalines as the Governor-General of Haiti.

While the document was printed in Port-au-Prince, the Haitian Declaration of Independence was first proclaimed as a speech at Gonaïves. Since the evidence that I found in Jamaica revealed that Corbet had brought the pamphlet to Jamaica around January 21, 1804, we can conclude

that the text of the document, composed by Louis Félix Boisrond-Tonnerre and commissioned by Jean-Jacques Dessalines, would have been carried the seventy miles from Gonaïves to Port-au-Prince in the two or three weeks after January 1, 1804.

I wrote to Deborah Jenson and Laurent Dubois about what I had found and their enthusiastic responses fuelled my continued work in the archives. But, as is often the case with historians (and maybe academics more generally), I did not immediately recognize that anyone beyond specialists in the field would care about my discovery of the long-sought Haitian Declaration of Independence.



John Thomson, "Haiti, Hispaniola or St. Domingo" (1815).
David Rumsey's Historical Map Collection



John Thomson, "Haiti, Hispaniola or St. Domingo" (1815), detail.
David Rumsey's Historical Map Collection

A few weeks later, Laurent emailed me to report that he had spoken with the Haitian archivist, Patrick Tardieu, who confirmed, after examining the digital copy of the document that I had made in the archives, that this was indeed the first official copy of the Declaration of Independence to be discovered since sometime in nineteenth century.

At this point I began to realize that more than specialists might care about my discovered, so I updated my Facebook status to share this news with my family, friends, and colleagues (these days I would have tweeted the news!). A friend of mine, Jacob Remes, immediately commented that I should contact the Office of News and Communications at Duke University because he was convinced that many people would be interested, especially because Haiti was constantly in the headlines at the time since Haiti had been devastated by a magnitude 7.0 earthquake less than a month earlier.⁵

It turned out that Jacob was right and indeed to an extent that was beyond all expectations. The story quickly spread around the world, broadcast on news networks and printed in over 50 national and international news sources. Journalists immediately connected the discovery to current events and expressed hope that this positive news might help Haitians during their current crisis. "That the

document would be found in February,” Damien Cave wrote in *The New York Times*, “just weeks after the earthquake that killed so many; that its authenticity would be confirmed in time for the donor conference that could define Haiti’s future—some see providence at work.” While Cave focused on the potential implications going forward, Siri Agrell of Canada’s *Globe and Mail* highlighted the importance of historical memory in times of need. “But her discovery,” Agrell reported,

which comes more than 200 years after the document was signed and ends decades of historical sleuthing intent on its recovery, could not come at a more poignant moment for the nation of Haiti, still reeling from the latest blow to its national identity. Struck by a devastating earthquake in January, the country is struggling to rebuild, and historians say the document will serve as a much-needed reminder of what has already been overcome.

What I appreciated most about the international public reaction was the obvious hunger for an alternative narrative of Haiti, one that emphasized the global significance of its achievements during and after the revolution. Cave’s article quoted Leslie Manigat, a Haitian historian and former president. “In the context of the Haitian tragedy,” Manigat argued, “it is important for Haitians and the rest of the world to remember the independence of Haiti.” It was a chance for a public audience to talk about something other than Haiti’s recent political turmoil, devastating poverty, and the destruction of the earthquake.

“‘We must recover,’ [Manigat] said, shouting in order to be heard through a phone in Port-au-Prince that cut out repeatedly. ‘We must find an alternative to the traditional meaning of independence, now, in the new world.’”



JUST OVER A YEAR after my initial trip to the archives in London, I returned to complete my dissertation research by investigating the holdings of the Jamaican Admiralty records in The National Archives. Much to my surprise, I found another type of printed copy of the Haitian Dec-

laration of Independence, a one-page broadside intended for posting in public places. In this case the document had been removed from the Admiralty records and re-cataloged as a map so that it would not have to be folded in the bound volume.

This second discovery emphasized one of the key explanations for why all the previous efforts to find an official copy of the Haitian Declaration of Independence had failed. Both extant versions are located in unexpected archival locations; unexpected, of course, unless we recognized the complex and integrated place that Haiti occupied in the Atlantic World in the nineteenth century. In this second case, to order the document you have to enter MFQ 1/184, not MFQ 184 as the removal slip notes. The catalog entry for the broadside printing of the Haitian Declaration of Independence does not even mention that the document is from Haiti (despite the fact that it is cataloged with three other important Haitian documents).

I have submitted multiple requests for the document to be re-cataloged and removed from circulation (in keeping with the fact that the pamphlet version was removed following my discovery of it from the Jamaican colonial record and has now been placed in secure holding for preservation).

Like Justin Lhérisson and Félix Viard in the early twentieth century and like Edmond Mangonès in the mid-twentieth century, Patrick Tardieu has renewed the calls for the government to send an official delegation to London to research the archival treasures relating to Haiti’s history. He recently wrote an article on one of the other documents that is cataloged with the broadside Declaration of Independence in an effort to emphasize the number of undiscovered sources that relate to Haiti’s history. “In presenting to the Haitian public this ordinance from January 20, 1804,” Tardieu wrote in the Haitian newspaper *Le Nouvelliste*, “I once again appeal to the authorities of the country. A cultural mission imposes itself on the banks of the Thames; Her Majesty’s Ambassador has he not made a formal invitation to the Haitian government in 2011? Are there other previously documents in the archives of London? Only an official mission will tell.”

Notes

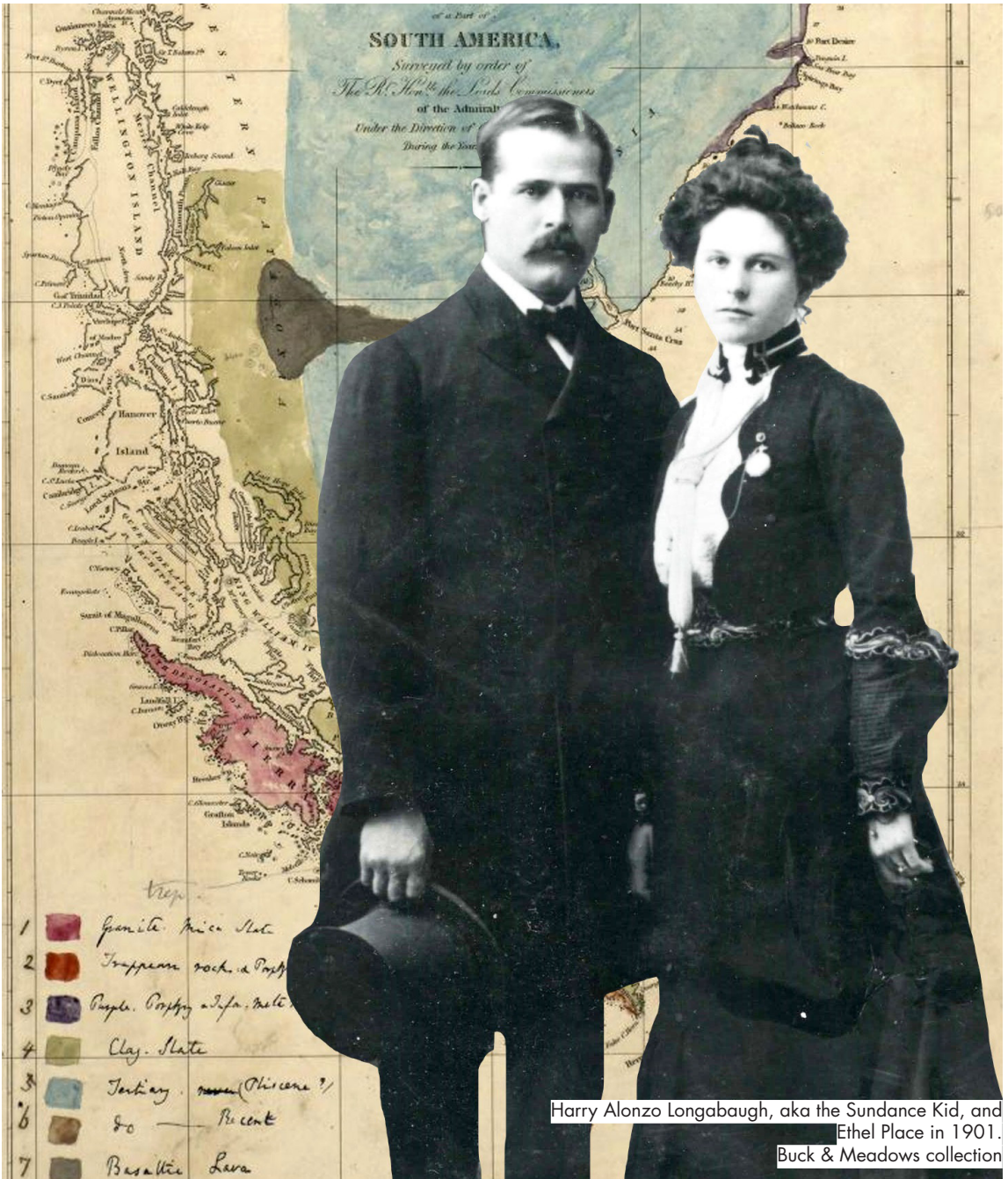
1. I am extremely grateful to Erin Zavitz for sharing the images of the articles in *Le Soir* (28 January 1903, FIC Bibliothèque Haïtienne in Port-au-Prince) and for writing a post about them for my Haiti and the Atlantic World blog (<http://haitidoi.com>). Zavitz is undertaking a systematic study of celebrations of Haitian independence for her dissertation; see Erin Zavitz, “Revolutionary Memories: Celebrating and Commemorating the Haitian Revolution, 1804-2004,” (PhD Dissertation, University of Florida, Forthcoming 2014).

2. According to Erin Zavitz’s research, the nineteenth-century Haitian author Emmanuel Chancy claimed that the original manuscript had burned in a fire of the Senate Building and the National Palace in 1866; Erin Zavitz, “Revolutionary Memories” (PhD Dissertation, University of Florida, Forthcoming 2014).

3. I would like to thank Matthew J. Smith and James Robertson at the University of the West Indies, Mona for their help and guidance on this first research trip to Kingston.

4. I published an article based on these documents and others in The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA): Julia Gaffield, “Haiti and Jamaica in the re-making of the early nineteenth century Atlantic World,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, July 2012 69(3): 583-614.

5. Many thanks to David Jarmul, Camille Jackson, and the rest of the staff at the Office of News and Communications at Duke University for the time and energy that they spent in sharing this story with people all around the world.



Bandit Resurrections: Who Was the Real Sundance Kid?

by Daniel Buck

LAST SUMMER, WYOMING Governor Matt Mead received an odd present from an Arizona businessman named Jerry Nickle: a just-published book promoting the idea that the author's great-grandfather William Henry Long was none other than the Sundance Kid, of Butch and Sundance fame. Even more surprising than the book was its delivery. Nickle and his co-author had borrowed horses in Cheyenne and rode along the sidewalk to see the governor.

Not only does Nickle claim that his great-grandfather Long was the famous Wild Bunch bandit—he also maintains that he and Butch Cassidy were not killed in Bolivia, as many believe. Nickle believes that his great-grandfather did not commit suicide, as his family long thought, but was murdered by fellow Wild Bunch member Matt Warner after an argument about a book Warner had planned to write that might have exposed Long as Sundance. Nickle's enthusiasm is not dampened by the absence of any evidence linking his great-grandfather to the Wild Bunch, or any evidence that he had ever even claimed to be the famous outlaw. After DNA tests failed to establish a link between Long and the Sundance Kid's actual family, Nickle turned to a new theory: his great-grandfather had stolen the identity of Harry Longabaugh, the man Western historians actually consider to be the Sundance Kid.

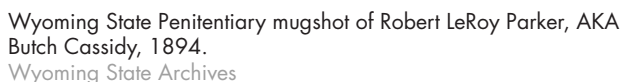
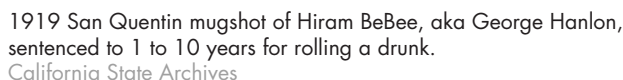
Welcome to the kaleidoscopic universe of Wild West history, where outlaws return from the dead with vampiric regularity. Long is by no means an anomaly, as bandit revivals are relatively common—at least among the better known of the criminal class. While in some cases a dead outlaw's identity is attributed to another deceased person—often by his ancestor—in others it is assumed by a living person, an imposter. These resurrectionists are a mixed posse of pranksters, genealogy boffins, and conspiracy theorists who cannot accept that their bandit hero is dead. And they find a ready audience because, well, who can resist a good story from the campfire?



Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid
(1969, 20th Century Fox)

BUTCH CASSIDY AND the Sundance Kid were part of a loose-knit congeries of Rocky Mountain outlaws active at the turn of the last century, dubbed “the Wild Bunch” by the press. Although Butch and Sundance committed few crimes together in the United States, they are indelibly joined as an outlaw dyad in the public's imagination because they fled to South America together (Sundance took along his companion, Ethel Place), probably died together in Bolivia in 1908, and, most importantly, were immortalized together in George Roy Hill's 1969 movie, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. Making a major contribution to the deification were Paul Newman as Cassidy and Robert Redford as Sundance.

Claiming to be Butch and/or Sundance (or any one of the many other famed bandits of the Wild West) has a long and storied tradition. William Henry Long, for example, is not the first man to have been volunteered as the Sundance Kid. In 1983, Connecticut high school principal Edward M. Kirby published *The Rise and Fall of the Sundance Kid*, which argued that criminal Hiram BeBee was Butch Cassidy's sidekick. BeBee died in a Utah prison in 1955 while serving a life sentence for the 1945 first-degree murder of a town marshal. As with Long, there was no evidence that BeBee had any connection to the Sundance Kid, save what Kirby said were unspecified alleged remarks of BeBee's that were never made public.



These hinted, covert identities are often absurd when laid against the reality. Aside from the lack of any link between BeBee and Sundance, there was a major physical disparity. BeBee was ugly and short, not quite five-foot-three, per a 1919 mug-shot card at San Quentin, where he had done time for rolling a drunk. Sundance was handsome and tall, upwards of six feet. BeBee looked like Jimmy Durante; Sundance indeed looked more like Robert Redford, his silver screen alter ego.

Sundance was not the only Wild Bunch member to have his identity stolen by a revivalist. In the 1920s, years after Butch Cassidy had expired in Bolivia, a Washington state machine-shop owner named William T. Phillips began visiting the outlaw's Wyoming haunts, searching for bandit treasure and dropping hints that he, Phillips, was the real deal. Some of Cassidy's old friends were taken in, others scoffed at the idea. Phillips wrote a memoir, "The Bandit Invincible," which he hoped to sell to Hollywood. The memoir was a hodge-podge of fact and fantasy, written more like a novella and told almost entirely in the third person, as if Phillips would barely allow himself to hint at his supposed identity as Cassidy.

Yet Phillips's con had legs. He died in 1937. More than three decades later, Larry Pointer, then a Bureau of Land Management staffer in Wyoming, came upon the tale, and after considerable additional research, persuaded the University of Oklahoma Press to publish *In Search of Butch Cassidy*, a sort of dual, or better put dueling, biography of Cassidy *qua* Phillips.*

The story was intriguing, because Cassidy vanished in 1908, presumably killed in Bolivia, and Phillips appeared on the scene in the United States in 1908, as if out of nowhere. But the larger possibility that Phillips was Cassidy couldn't pan out. In the late 1980s, when Anne Meadows and I began researching the story of Cassidy and Sundance in South America, we found that although Phillips had claimed that he had escaped the shootout in Bolivia and returned to the United States.

*For a while, Pointer had collaborated with a Spokane newspaper reporter, Jim Dullenty, but they disagreed on how to approach the story. Dullenty wanted to include contradictory evidence, and treat the topic more as a mystery.

getting married in Michigan in May 1908, the shootout had in fact happened in November, after his marriage.

The calendar is the researcher's best friend. As are maps: Phillips had located the bandits' Argentine ranch in the wrong part of Patagonia, had them holding up trains that were not yet built at the time they were in South America, and had them bivouacing for several days in a village in northern Argentina, Gaciayo, that turned out not to exist. Gaciayo is a fake cartographic entry, also known as a Mountweazel, designed to catch copyright violators—competitors who poach maps. Phillips had been no closer to South America than the atlases he carelessly consulted.

Pointer wiggled around the marriage date problem by positing the idea that there were several Cassidys, before finally throwing in the towel when it turned out that Phillips was actually William T. Wilcox, a petty criminal who had been in prison with Cassidy in the 1890s.

Bandit resurrectionists eschew Occam's Razor. When faced with an inconvenient fact, they roll out a *deus ex machina*—one after another if necessary—until all contradictions are enveloped in an elaborate web of preposterous explanations.



“BRUSHY BILL” ROBERTS surfaced with his **B**own bundle of contradictions in New Mexico in 1950, claiming to be Billy the Kid. He was chaperoned by a lawyer and wanted a pardon, though for what was not clear, as his crimes were seven decades old. The actual Billy had been shot dead in 1881 by Sheriff Pat Garrett.

Roberts talked a good game—previously he had claimed to be Jesse James—and he garnered more than a few supporters, including his hometown, Hico, Texas, which opened a “Billy the Kid Museum and Gift Shop.” He had lots of press over the years. Reporters relish back-from-the-dead outlaw stories; they’re fun to write and the readers lap them up. In modern lingo, they’re clickbait.

Serious Billy the Kid historians do not give Roberts's tale any credence. The Roberts family's Bi-

ble reportedly lists his birth year as 1879, making him two years old when Billy was shot. He was an actual kid, but not Billy.

Before Roberts came along, there was John Miller, who died in Arizona in 1937, more than half-a-century before his resurrection went public, stoked by Helen Airy's 1993 book, *Whatever Happened to Billy the Kid*. According to Airy, whatever happened was that Miller was the revered bad boy. Evidence in support of Miller's having been Billy included private comments he had reportedly made to that effect and the fact that he had buck teeth, as did Billy. (As did Bugs Bunny, come to think of it.)

Jesse James, however, was the true magnet for bandit resurrections. No matter that in 1882 the outlaw had been murdered in his own house, and that his wife and mother had buried him. Half a dozen men later either claimed to be the Missouri bandit or were shoved forward by their descendants.

J. Frank Dalton is the most well-known of the pack. His story was broadcast by an Oklahoma radio station in the late 1940s, and the next day, the *Lawton Constitution* headlined, “Jesse James is Alive in Lawton.” At Dalton's first public appearance in town, some 30,000 people came out to gawk. He went on to a brief career—he died in 1951—making personal appearances and working the carnival circuit, ending up at Meramec Caverns in Missouri, sharing the stage on one occasion with Billy the Kid hoaxer Brushy Bill Roberts.

Decades after the J. Frank Dalton controversy had faded away, Betty Dorsett Duke stepped up to announce that her great-grandfather, James Lafayette Courtney, was Jesse James, having escaped death in 1882 when another man was killed instead, and lived until 1943. Duke wrote, as seems to be obligatory, a book, *The Truth About Jesse James, As Told by His Great-Granddaughter* (2007). Over the course of 672 pages—almost 200 pages longer than the outlaw's definitive biography, *Jesse James: Last Rebel of the Civil War* (2002), by T.J. Stiles—she pelts the reader with arguments, among them that her great-grandfather hid gold coins around his property, and whenever anyone approached his farm house at night, he would douse the lights and lurk by the front door with a loaded pistol.

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Doubts will linger, and sooner or
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Among the inconvenient contradictions Duke skirts: Jesse James was of average height, 5' 7" or so, and Courtney was well over six feet. More importantly, Jesse James's wife was in the next room when he was murdered in 1882, and she buried him. Duke couldn't even win over her own family. Angry Courtney descendants launched a competing website to refute her claims.

It does not seem to matter if an outlaw dies a disputed and anonymous death, as in the case of Butch and Sundance, or in full view of his family, as with Jesse James. Doubts will linger, and sooner or later, pretenders appear. "To some extent," English historian Eric Hobsbawm wrote in *Bandits* (2000), the resurrection of the bandit:

expresses the wish that the people's champion cannot be defeated, the same sort of wish that produces the perennial myths of the good king—and the good bandit—who has not really died, but will come back one day to restore justice. Refusal to believe in the robber's death is a certain criterion of his 'nobility' ... For the bandit's defeat and death is the defeat of his people; and what is worse, of hope. Men can live without justice, and generally, must, but they cannot live without hope.*

*Lawmen, however, are a different matter. Lawmen, once killed, stay dead. Former sheriff Pat Garrett, shot in 1908, never returned. Colorado lawmen Edward Farr and Henry Love, murdered while pursuing Wild Bunch outlaws in 1899, never joined another posse.

Hobsbawm might be overthinking it. It's just as likely that bandit revenants spring as much from yarning and pranking, American folkloric traditions that have given us Bigfoot and the jackalope, and from the longstanding attraction of conspiracy theories and genealogy.

North Carolina State University professor Richard W. Slatta examines the storytelling tradition in *The Mythical West: An Encyclopedia of Legend, Lore, and Popular Culture* (2001). "Myth is more powerful, pervasive, and alluring than history," Slatta writes. Accordingly, he focuses "on the plethora of legendary, mythical images, events, people, and places associated with the Old West and New." Pranking is likewise popular in the United States. Many urban legends start as a joke. Once launched, the joke billows into legend. The son of original Bigfoot proponent Ray Wallace, a northern California construction worker, told the press after his father died in 2002 that the whole thing had been an elaborate stunt, involving among other things, huge wooden feet used to create the forest giant's tracks. Nonetheless, the hunt for Bigfoot continues unabated.

Two of Butch Cassidy's brothers reportedly impersonated him for sport. One of his doppelgangers, William T. Phillips, took periodic leave of an unhappy marriage in Spokane to visit the outlaw's haunts in Wyoming and take up with a girlfriend. She confided after his death that the Cassidy burlesque was all a joke.

Conspiracy theories often underpin outlaw resurrection stories. J. Frank Dalton claimed that

he—the real Jesse James—hid in a stable near his house while someone else was shot in his stead. Brushy Bill Roberts said that with Pat Garrett’s connivance another man was killed in his place, allowing him—the real Billy—to escape to Mexico. Explanations for Butch and Sundance having survived the shootout in Bolivia range from changing clothes with dead soldiers to an outright refusal to believe that Bolivians could do what Americans could not, bring down two of the Old West’s most well-known outlaws. In fact, most of the Wild Bunch members were captured or killed by American lawmen, and for their part, Bolivian soldiers and mine-camp posses caught most of the bandits operating in their country in the early 1900s. Banditry is an unforgiving occupation that provides little room for error.

The faked death phenomenon encompasses many historical figures, not just outlaws. Examples include Martin Bormann, Adolf Hitler, T.E. Lawrence, Pancho Villa, and Tupac Shakur. “One hesitates to believe [the Bormann] story,” Christopher Isherwood wrote, “if only because it is a variant of the basic immortality legend which is often attached as a postscript to the apparent death of great or notorious men.” A friend in Bariloche, Argentina, once showed me a map of the town cemetery indicating precisely where Hitler was buried. He asked me not to tell anyone. I haven’t, until now.

Interest in genealogy, fueled by popular websites like Ancestry.com, has also played a role. James Lafayette Courtney and William Henry Long were both “discovered” by descendants poking around

in their ancestral attics. The lack of any evidence linking the men to Jesse James or the Sundance Kid was a minor inconvenience. A staffer at the National Archives, which fields many genealogical queries, told me that people always want to find a famous person roosting in their family tree. The don’t much care who it is, Joan of Arc or Jack the Ripper, just so long as they get bragging rights.

No excursion into the world of bandit revivals would be complete without mentioning Robin Hood, the fountainhead of bandit mythology. The idea of the good bandit, who robs the rich and gives to the poor, who saves the widow’s farm, and whose death is unacceptable comes from Robin Hood, writes Stephen Knight in his *Robin Hood: A Mythic Biography* (2003). “The only modern film that has shown the hero’s death,” says Knight, “*Robin and Marian* (1976), is the only one to have lost money at the box office.”

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Following a Migrant Route

by Josi Ward

I STILL DON'T know where I'll be staying tonight. But I've accomplished the few tasks I needed to get done by this evening. I have a rental car that is neither fancy nor colorful. I have taken my husband's advice and found a dusty road on which to drive for a handful of miles, so that the car stands out even less for what it is—full of a graduate student's arsenal of technology. And I have arrived at my first stop, Brawley, California, before sunset. For the next month, I'll be driving from this southernmost site north to Yuba City.

These include an SLR, a small archive camera, an Apple laptop, an iPhone, and two external hard drives. I am almost as anxious about protecting my technology as I am about my own personal safety.

In the two to three days I have allotted for each stop, my goal is to find and visit (wherever possible) the sites of each of the thirteen migratory labor camps built in California by the Farm Security Administration in the late 1930s. These camps were modest and rural—designed to meet the immediate need of thousands of migrants, many having driven to California from the Dust Bowl states, seeking work and sanitary shelter. Residents stayed in each camp only as long as they could find work in the vicinity. Thus, the camps were located at intervals up California's central agricultural corridor. In all but one case, I do not know what I will find remaining on-site. Given that the camps were initially built as temporary communities, I hold little hope of finding much in the way of physical, let alone architectural, remains. Yet I have convinced myself that it is important to know whether any parts of these sites still stand, even if I find only plowed fields where there were once communities of government relief and mutual aid.*

Driving through the largely abandoned downtown of Brawley, wondering where I will stay for the night, I feel ill-prepared. Yet I have intentionally put myself in this situation. Although I have a rough schedule for the upcoming weeks, I haven't made any reservations in advance. My plan is to build flexibility into the schedule, to let myself overstay if a particular site or archive is especially rich, and to pass through quickly if I find nothing but subdivisions and closed libraries.

It occurs to me only later that some of my anxieties about this trip—deeply unfamiliar mobility, worry over carrying so many valuables in the trunk of my car, uncertainty whether I will find any work worth keeping me at each stop along the way—echo those of the people whose migration I am researching.

Having budgeted \$45 a night for lodging, my choices in Brawley are few. I find a vacancy in

a motel near the Salton Sea, check into a second-floor room, bring my equipment and a change of clothes in from the car, and set into inhaling my fish tacos. At first the cable TV drowns out the noises from the neighboring room. Soon the sounds get louder, the screams more audible. The wall I am leaning up against shakes. I turn off the TV. A woman's voice is the only consistent noise, interrupted periodically by crashes, vibrations. What do I do? What does she need? Before I can decide which number to dial on the phone, heavy footsteps pass my door, a fist pounds on the adjacent one, and the screams stop. I turn the TV back on. That night I sleep fitfully.

First thing the next morning I re-evaluate my budget. No more taquería lunches or dinners will buy me another \$10 a night. My hotel choices expand considerably.



IN MANY OF THE counties I plan to visit, I have a general sense of where the migrant camps had been located. But here in Brawley, and neighboring Indio, I know only that there was a camp somewhere in, or immediately outside of, town. On the hunt for maps or plats that may identify a precise location, I begin at the Planning Department. They send me to the City Clerk's office. The City Clerk suggests perhaps the Planning Department or the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber of Commerce has a locked vault with historic materials, but no key.

At the Brawley Public Library I ask to see copies of the *Brawley News* published between 1935 and 1940. Large, hard-bound volumes emerge—one for each year. Placing them carefully on my table, the head librarian asks after my project. I explain that I am trying to locate the site of the FSA migrant labor camp that was built somewhere in Brawley. She shakes her head emphatically: “There were no internment camps in the Imperial Valley.” This is neither the first nor the final time that I will shake my head in response, and insist to the helpful archivist (to myself as well?) that the camps I seek are quite different in kind than those she is imagining. At a time when Californians were fighting vigorously to prevent any programs that would enable migrants to stay in their com-

*Last summer, I passed through the Firebaugh site on an unrelated road trip with my father and uncle and was elated to find a sign identifying the area as USDA Labor Housing. I stepped out of the truck, photographed the sign, and we got back on the highway. The entire visit lasted ninety seconds. Yet the discovery of existing labor housing on site gave me the confidence, and a modicum of evidence, to apply for grants to fund this month-long return visit.

munities—fearful that they brought with them diseases both social and biological—these camps were designed to re-assert the respectability of their migrant residents. Bathing and laundry facilities provided bodily cleanliness, while a system of self-governance entrusted the residents with the organization and care for their communities. I am aware that my optimism about these camps is at odds with some historians’ perspectives. Yet the more stories I read about them, the more I find an instructive example of intelligent and productive government aid.

In the years of newspapers that I scan that afternoon, I find two specific references to the location of the Brawley camp. One article locates it at the W. I. Wilson tract just north of city limits. Another refers to its location on Imperial Avenue just north of town. On the way home I drive north on Imperial and find subdivisions on both sides of the road. Eventually Imperial dead-ends into a construction site for what appears to be another housing tract. I take pictures aimlessly.



MY LAST HOPE in Brawley is the Pioneer’s Museum, which is affiliated with the Imperial County Historical Society. The Museum is ten miles south of town. I call before making the drive. Carol, who answers the phone, is quick to clarify she is only the gift shop attendant: “My only exposure to that era is reading *Grapes of Wrath*.” I tell her how apt her association is, that in fact John Steinbeck worked closely with the camp manager at the Arvin camp, and interviewed many of the residents, when researching the novel. She promises to ask Mike, their historian, if they have any maps in their collections. Two hours later my phone rings. “You’re in luck! We have a historic map of all the labor camps in Imperial County on display.” I am elated, and leave immediately.

My car is only the second in the lot. As I enter, Carol calls from the far corner, “You must be Josi,” and tells me Mike will be down in a few minutes. Browsing the display of local taxidermy—some quite lifelike and others uncannily stretched—I wait with guarded optimism. Mike leads me upstairs to the chronological exhibits of agriculture in the county. He excitedly points me past the



The scale-model Okie truck in the Pioneer’s Museum “Hard Times” diorama.
Josi Ward, 2013

nineteenth-century farm equipment to the “Hard Times” exhibit, and tells me the map is in the display case at the front of the diorama. I approach the scale-model of an Okie’s truck, piled high with miniature possessions. Adjacent to the truck is a framed print of Dorothea Lange’s “Migrant Mother.” I delight in the details of the diorama—the whimsical stuffed crows, the Highway 99 road sign—before turning my focus to the historic map.

The map inside this glass display case, shielded from air and curious hands, consists of a piece of paper approximately two feet wide, cut out in the shape of the state of California. Atop the map sit what look like red Monopoly houses. Coffee stirrers bridge the space between the little houses and their corresponding labels. The town names—“Brawley,” “Calipatria,”—are printed, cut-out, and neatly laid atop of the map, outside of California’s flattened outline. No suggestion of topography adds precision to this featureless outline; the scale of the plastic houses suggests the camps were the size of the cities that housed them. And no distinction has been made between squatters’ camps, private camps, and government camps; the list of sites seems to include whatever camps Dorothea Lange and fellow FSA photographers documented.

I ask myself what I had expected: a government published map, perhaps, or at least one that originated in Imperial County; the indication of streets

or specific tracts of land; the label of “FSA migrant labor camp” somewhere along a street named Imperial? Although this map represents an inclusive, if unspecific, documentation of sites where migrants found shelter, it will not help me get any closer to locating the Brawley camp. I marvel for minutes, then move back downstairs. Mike is nowhere to be found. All I hear is the buzz of overhead fluorescent lights and the motor of Carol’s electric wheelchair, on which she is circling the first-floor exhibits. I slip quietly out the door.



MY NEXT DESTINATION is Kern County, where the Arvin and Shafter camps were established. Arvin, or “Weedpatch” as it is more commonly called, has long been the most famous of the FSA communities because of its association with John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*. I know for certain that a handful of historic buildings remain there. I head directly to the former camp site. My enthusiasm mounts as I pass the Weedpatch supermarket. Then I see the historic water tower in the distance. Familiar from so many FSA photographs of this camp and others, the water tower assures me that I am headed in the right direction.

Pulling into the parking lot at Arvin, I pass over a large speed bump and a “Children playing” sign. I recall that as they first pulled into the camp, the Joads’ “whole truck leaped into the air and crashed down again.” Cursing at the jolt, Tom asked the watchman what purpose it could possibly serve, and received the reply: “a lot of kids play in here. You tell folks to go slow and they’re liable to forget. But let ‘em hit that hump once and they don’t.” A common speed bump was the first signal for the Joads that this camp cared about the people, and children, living within.

Steinbeck based the Joads’ government camp on Weedpatch. Although his investigation of life in the camps began as a series of articles for *The San Francisco News*, his portrayal of the Joads in *The Grapes of Wrath* is why Weedpatch is remembered today.



One of the two metal shelters still standing at Weedpatch. This shelter serves as a storage building today, while the other is empty and accessible to inquisitive visitors. Adjacent to the shelter stands the recently restored community center building.

Josi Ward, 2013



Festival signs stored inside the Arvin Community Center.

Josi Ward, 2013

Although I had known that some historic buildings remained at Arvin, I had not been prepared to find that the Arvin Migrant Center is still in operation, still housing migrant agricultural workers for roughly six months of every year. Although the site has moved from federal to state to county auspices, I discover it has served this purpose consistently since the days of the FSA program. The demographics of the workers have changed since the New Deal years, of course. Whereas the residents of the initial camps were primarily white Americans displaced from their tenant farms, now the workers are predominantly Mexican Americans who live further south most of the year—in Braw-

ley and Calexico—but come up here for the months of the harvest. I cannot imagine that the federal government of today, nor even of 80 years ago, would have built such ambitious communities for an immigrant population. Yet it strikes me as an important legacy of the FSA program that these spaces now serve a population whose health and rights are of even less concern to the American public than had been those of their white predecessors.

Today the parking lot is empty; the season has not yet begun. Albeza at the front desk is patient with my curiosity, and offers to unlock the chain-link fence that surrounds the collection of historic buildings, abandoned but stable, in the far northeast corner of the site.

Albeza leaves me be, and tells me I'm free to walk inside any of the buildings that are open. I am most excited to

see two of the ubiquitous one-room, metal shelters still standing. These structures were considered an upgrade from the rudimentary tent platforms in the earliest camps, yet because they are such modest structures, I had suspected most would be gone. I have long wondered how families lived in these small spaces, how any furniture or belongings might have fit in addition to bodies. The shelter is empty, its concrete floor swept clean. I measure its dimensions: 12' by 16'. Having wondered what the heat must have been like in an all-metal shelter intended for a desert, I am surprised how cool the air is. A breeze passes through the screened windows. I extend my arms and cannot reach the peak of the roof.

From the shelter I walk into the only other unlocked building. The community center is vast where the shelter was small. Yet like the shelter, this building is open within—a virtually undivided interior space. Traces of “Dust Bowl Day” are scattered throughout the room, remnants of what had been an annual festival in which former residents of this and other FSA camps met on site for a day of music, food, and memories. I try to imagine the noise of the events this community center has hosted; not just the recent festivals, but also the Thanksgiving dinners and sewing classes and elementary school plays I have read about in the documents of the camp manager, Tom Collins. The weekly reports that he submitted to the regional office of the FSA are exhaustive catalogs of arrivals and departures, and births and deaths. They contain detailed accounts of baseball games, marriage proposals, bible studies, and carpools to the fields that betray his pride in the camp as well as in the residents who planned and promoted these community events. As vivid as his stories were, and as inspired as I felt reading his tender accounts of life at Weedpatch—nothing shakes the sense of utter emptiness in this enormous hall. Today this room feels forgotten.



The water tower at Arvin had stood at the center of the migrant labor camp, and today is my first view of what remains of Weedpatch.

Josi Ward, 2013



The entrance to the Arvin Migrant Center slows oncoming traffic.

Josi Ward, 2013



AFTER THE SUCCESSFUL visit at Arvin, I have virtually no expectations for the visit to Shafter. Counting on such rich discoveries would surely lead to disappointment. Like the Arvin camp, Shafter still has an active Migrant Center on site. Also like the Arvin camp, it is virtually empty; only one family has arrived so far this season. This time I don't notice any identifiably historic buildings; no familiar community center or metal shelter. When I ask the manager, Alfredo, if he recalls when the old buildings were torn down, he informs me several remain, and offers to drive me to them. ("It's too hot to walk!") I gratefully comply.

Alfredo is generous with his time and his stories, and seems amused as I take pictures of the oldest,



The undivided interior space of the Arvin community center is typical of these buildings at other FSA camps. This picture was taken from the raised stage at the rear of the building.
Josi Ward, 2013



All but one of the metal shelters from the Shafter camp were removed years ago, auctioned off for use as storage sheds and outbuildings.
Josi Ward, 2013

most neglected structures on site. As we drive past the old bathhouses, I notice a metal shelter in the distance, surrounded by a chain-link fence. The profile of these shelters is becoming quite familiar. I ask if we can see that building too. Alfredo seems pleased. He tells me he had lived in a metal shelter at Arvin for a few years in the mid-1960s. I ask him what the heat was like. He groans. To cool them down, he explains, they would lay a carpet over the roof and soak it in water. But he also explains that the heat wasn't such a problem because it was safer then, "You could sleep and live outside."^{*}

I recall how active the community spaces looked in the historic photos I've found of these camps and remind myself to keep this explanation in mind. With shared bathhouses and community center buildings, the vast majority of private and public life must have happened outside of the houses. So it seems all the more significant that individual family shelters were provided, despite all other facilities being communal. It dawns on me that the transformation of house into home was yet another activity enabled by the camp program.

Alfredo lets me help to move the rubble, weeds, and debris from the front door of the shelter so that he can open it. He explains that the last of the metal shelters were removed in the 1980s, but points out the rows of concrete foundations that still remain. "Why did you keep this one?" I ask. "For history," he smiles.



THE WEEKS PASS SLOWLY as I move from Shafter to Woodville, Tulare, Firebaugh, Westley, Thornton, Winters, Yuba City, Gridley, and Marysville. If needed, I spend the first day locating the site. The next day is the visit, the interviews, the photographs. Finally, the public library, the local historical society, the microfilm reels. I become accustomed to finding agricultural labor housing on site, and to finding roads and community spaces laid out exactly as they were by the FSA

^{*}I have even noticed some FSA shelters in the backyards of homes in the area, being used as storage sheds. When I ask after about those sightings, Alfredo explains that they sold most of the shelters at auction when the new housing was built in the 1960s.

"Why did you keep this one?" I ask.
"For history," he smiles.



This portion of a mural on the site of the former Linnell camp in Tulare represents the two most recognizable features of the FSA community—the community center and the water tower—both of which still stand at the center of Linnell Farm Labor Center.

Josi Ward, 2013



The former community center at the Yuba City unit was converted into a school building in the 1960s, and today serves as a preschool for the Yuba City Unified School District. Several interior walls have been added to subdivide the interior space, but otherwise the floor plan remains largely unchanged.

Josi Ward, 2013

planners. The ubiquitous speed bumps comfort me, as they once did the Joads. The wide porches and circular windows on the gable ends of the community centers become so familiar that I easily identify the buildings, even when significantly remodeled. I come to rely on the sight of the water towers—unused artifacts at the center of living landscapes—to guide my route to the camp sites.

The routines of mobility also become familiar. With each relocation, I feel less vulnerable. The nightly move of technology and a change of clothes from trunk into motel room, the morning purchase of block ice for the cooler, the 6pm call to assure my husband all is well; these things comfort me that I am safe and my work is progressing incrementally. The motel rooms remain inconsistent, but my routine becomes steadying.

By the time I return home to Ithaca I am satisfied that the trip was well worth both the expense and the anxiety. The purpose of these site visits was to encounter the history of these camps in ways that cannot happen at the archives. This month's research has given me a sense of architectural scale and enclosure; it has introduced the voices and faces of people with memories of the camps; and it has prompted some empathy with the logistics and vulnerabilities of regular relocation.

I remain as far removed from the residents of these camps, their losses and fears and consolations, as I ever was. What I feel slightly closer to are the ways that this network of FSA camps—the series of communities designed to be occupied and left on a seasonal basis—served their temporary residents. As an architectural historian I was prepared to think about how facilities and spaces within the camps enabled certain routines, both communal and private. But until I followed the route myself, I hadn't contemplated how meaningful routine itself must have been. As residents repeatedly relocated to follow the promise of work elsewhere, they found a few places that were both physically and socially familiar. Among the many provisions of these camps—the running water, the weekly dances, the committee meetings, the community gardens—the promise of familiarity for migrating families must have been invaluable. This discovery alone was worth the trip.



Interviews with Young Historians

JUST OVER a year ago, The Appendix's founders were casting about for the right language to explain why they were stealing time away from their doctoral dissertations for a journal that would exist, at least at first, only on the web. The result was our best attempt to channel the spirited conversations we had daily amongst ourselves and with other younger historians. "The Appendix sprang from a simple idea," we wrote: "a lot of what makes the past fascinating, human, and relevant ends up on history's cutting room floor."

What our call to arms elided was what it was like actually gather up those fallen strands. Why do we who venture into the past do what we do, study what we study?

On the anniversary of that opening salvo, we decided to address that lack and ask a series of young historians about who they are, what they do, and what they want to see, going forward, as they walk backwards in time.

We hope you enjoy their responses.



Rebecca Onion

Postdoctoral Fellow at the Philadelphia Area Center for History of Science

Editor, The Slate Vault

Who are you and where are you from?

I'M REBECCA ONION, originally from a small town in central New Hampshire. I've lived in Milton, MA; Barcelona, Spain; New Haven, CT; Brooklyn, NY; and Austin, TX (where I went to graduate school in the Department of American Studies at UT-Austin). I'm currently a postdoctoral fellow at the Philadelphia Area Center for History of Science.

How did you become a historian?

Although I was an American Studies major as an undergrad at Yale, I followed a concentration in literature within that degree, and was determined to study contemporary culture. I even co-founded a journal with a fellow student—*The Journal of American Contemporary Culture*—to prove that “now” was a worthy object of study.

It wasn't until I got to graduate school—hell-bent on studying contemporary conservative youth cultures—that I realized history was really where I wanted to pitch my tent. I have to credit my department for that awakening. My advisors, Janet Davis and Julia Mickenberg, are both fascinated by—in love with, even—the archive. Taking classes with them, and with the rest of the excellent cultural historians in my department, I started venturing cautiously into writing some archive-driven seminar papers. After I wrote my master's thesis, for which I did research at the University of Alaska in Anchorage, I was totally hooked.

Why did you choose what you research?

American Studies allows for a ton of latitude when it comes to research interests. Even within the general rubric of cultural history, there's still a lot of space to range. The subfields that I gravitate toward—childhood studies, history of education, science and technology studies, visual and material culture, science fiction, museum studies—have

to do with the circulation of different types of knowledge in people's everyday worlds.

I'm interested in the cultural side of the history of science. How have ordinary people known about the natural and technological worlds? And what have the political and social stakes of that knowledge been? The “science” that interests me is often confused, diluted, or erroneous; I'm forever intrigued by the ways that people take complex received ideas and bend them to their own purposes, whatever those purposes may be.

I've also always been interested in children's culture. Childhood is often naturalized or seen as a diminished version of adult culture, while given disproportionate ideological importance when people talk about the past and future. That's a potent mix that allows for a lot of interesting analysis. In graduate school, some of my favorite books combined cultural history and childhood studies (Nicholas Sammond's *Babes in Tomorrowland*, Carolyn Steedman's *Strange Dislocations*, my advisor Julia Mickenberg's *Learning From the Left*—and, more recently, Robin Bernstein's *Racial Innocence*).

I combined those two interests in my dissertation, which looks at the ideological stakes of the promotion of science play in twentieth-century American children's culture. Next, I'll write about dark 1970s environmentalism and children's culture, and then possibly about pseudoscience and the occult in the seventies. (That's a far-out forecast! To be taken with a grain of salt.)

What do you do with your history? (By which we mean—do you publish, are you an activist, do you teach, do you make films, etc.)

I publish traditional academic work: articles, reviews, (hopefully soon) a book. I go to conferences and present to academic audiences. And I have taught, though I'm not teaching right now.

As of November 2012, I've run Slate.com's history blog, the Vault. The blog's posts showcase one interesting object/item/photo/document per day, running that document as a 920-p-wide image, along with a little bit of explanatory text.

This gig has been an excellent chance for me to let my curiosity run amok. For the Vault, my research is totally different than it is for my "regular" academic work. The main things I need to do while poking around and looking for blog content are to make sure that the document can tell a compact story (one that might lend itself to a headline), and also that it bears a second—and third—look.

I'm after those documents that are surprising, tell you something new about history, and invite multiple interpretations and fascinations. I think of them as "sticky" documents. (Here are some examples of some of the ones that have worked the best.)

I think the Vault proves that people like looking at primary sources. There are SO many digital archives out there, but people don't necessarily know that they're there, or know what could be inside. The Vault's about unpacking those boxes a little bit—offering readers a sense of what's out there, while pointing them to places where they could do further poking around of their own.

I also run the blog's Twitter feed and Facebook page. I do a lot of research and reading on the Web to find new content, and not everything that I find is right for a blog post. The Twitter feed is a place where I can share some of the stories, documents, and photos that overflow from my Feedly reader and my Tumblr dash.

In the future, I'd like to do more long-form history journalism that puts sources front and center. (There are more than a few groups of sources that I've discovered while working on the Vault that deserve more than 300 words.) I'd like to get into radio—maybe work on a podcast or try to produce a segment for somebody else's show. I'd also like to do more digital history—I've got two or three such projects that are sort of half-underway. Ah, for a 36-hour day.

Not to sound too woo-woo, but I often look around myself and think: "Every second of my own life is layered with so much meaning and so many influences, and there are so many things I cannot explain. How mind-blowing that every moment of everyone's life, for all of history, has had that same degree of complexity." Historical practice is a way to try to tease out those complexities—to be in a little bit in touch, all epistemological impossibilities aside, with the variety of human experience.

Also, history is just endlessly mentally demanding. As soon as you've got one area of knowledge nailed down—"I think I know a bit about twentieth-century American periodicals"—you realize that your research is taking you someplace else, and you need to learn some new stuff. You can read and research all your life and never be done.

Then, of course, there's the project of communicating and teaching all that you've learned—a whole other level of practice.

It's all super hard, and super engaging.

What do you think is the future of history?

This perspective may be warped by the huge amount of time I spend on the history Internet, but I do think that digital availability is going to free people up to develop new relationships with sources. On Tumblr, I just laugh and marvel at the college and high school students developing what can only be described as "fandoms" around particular founding fathers, wars, or historical periods. I hope more and more people will be able to use the resources of the Internet to feel a little bit of that thrill of discovery, love for, or connection with the actual sources of history.

The problem will be trying to make sure that there's context and continuity of argument in all of that magpie accumulation of shiny objects. I think teachers at all levels can help with that project, if allowed the latitude to integrate non-traditional digital work into their teaching.

Mairin Odle

PhD Candidate in Atlantic History, NYU

Who are you and where are you from?

I'M A PH.D CANDIDATE in Atlantic History at New York University and right now I'm a Sawyer Fellow at the McNeil Center for Early American Studies. I'm from the Appalachian foothills of central West Virginia, and, more recently, Brooklyn.

How did you become a historian?

It was probably an easy choice; my parents took me antiquing a lot as a child and I always liked imagining who must've owned these interesting things and what their lives were like. My father also used to do a lot of restoration and reproduction work, with a specialty in early American hunting accoutrements, actually. I'm sure living in a house full of powder horns and other eighteenth-century artifacts was a factor.

Why did you choose what you research?

My current research looks at certain types of permanent, painful alterations of the body that took place in cross-cultural encounters: scalping, tattooing, and branding. I'm interested in people who were marked in these ways and how, in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Atlantic settings, thinking about their transformed bodies could be a way to think about the implications of contact between people unfamiliar with one another.

My initial interest in the topic was learning about a Lenape man who had been scalped by Pennsylvania colonists in the mid-eighteenth century—and survived. I thought, 'I didn't know that could happen! What did he do after that?' I wanted to know what people in early America did about scars they

couldn't escape: how it affected ideas of their personal or collective identities, what sorts of policies or behaviors these marks set in motion.

What do you do with your history?

I haven't published a great deal yet, particularly since the dissertation is still a work-in-progress, but I'm working on it! And I love giving talks and teaching—it gives me a chance to play storyteller for a bit and share some of the intriguing things I'm learning.

Why study history?

Human behavior is endlessly fascinating (and sometimes frustrating). Why do people do what they do? How did we end up in this place, at this moment, living the way we do, thinking the way we think? Studying history is so crucial to having even the beginnings of interesting answers to interesting questions. Why wouldn't someone want to try to understand this amazing and weird existence a bit better?

Alternatively, one could just say that archives are fun and old books smell good.

What do you think is the future of history?

I was recently reading a travel narrative from the late eighteenth century, written by a soldier and trader in the Great Lakes region, and he reported something I hadn't seen elsewhere. One of the topics I study is scalping survivors, and this author said that he knew of people who had been scalped who wore "a plate of silver or tin on the crown of the head, to keep it from cold"—fascinating, and something I have to look into now!



Jessica Luther

Writer and Activist

Who are you and where are you from?

I'M JESSICA LUTHER, a writer, historian, and activist. I grew up as an Air Force brat, living across the US South, spending the majority of grade school in central Florida. I got my BA in Classical Civilizations from Florida State University and my MA in Latin Literature from the University of Texas. I do freelance writing and have been published in *The Texas Observer* and at *The Guardian*, *The Atlantic*, *Salon*, and *Feministing*. I cover a wide range of topics including sports and culture, the intersection of feminism and romance novels, and reproductive rights.

And in my spare time, I am a reproductive justice activist in Texas. I was most recently very involved in the widely-covered protests at the Texas capitol against anti-abortion legislation. My involvement in those protests was profiled in *The Texas Observer* and at *The American Prospect*, *Ms Magazine*, and *Salon*, and on a variety of national and even international podcasts and radio shows, including the BBC World Service and ABC radio in Australia.

How did you become a historian?

There is one particular moment that stands out for me. When I was maybe ten or twelve, I went to Mesa Verde, a national park in southern Colorado. It is the site of an indigenous people—the Anasazi, ancestors to the modern Pueblo people—that exists in the side of a cliff attached to a mesa (hence the name). There are these amazing villages built in alcoves in the cliff, some large enough to hold hundreds of people. I remember being there and just not understanding how these villages would have been built. The Anasazi abandoned Mesa Verde suddenly around the thirteenth century. I was fascinated by that aspect—what could cause an entire group of people who had spent the time and effort to build such magnificence to leave it behind in such a hurry. For years, I imagined I would go to school to specifically study that his-

tory so I could answer all of those particular questions. I just knew that was what I was going to do.

I didn't end up studying the Anasazi or Mesa Verde but I did keep questioning the past, and I kept my desire to do something with my life where I would get to answer those sorts of questions.

What sort of histories are you interested in?

I am a cultural historian at heart. I find cultural production and consumption so fascinating. How does a culture of people (however that is defined) create products? Who in a culture is producing and who is consuming? How do people inside of a particular cultural group define themselves?

Specifically, I'm fascinated by how cultures understand human bodies. I wrote my senior thesis as an undergrad on the ancient Greek belief about women's wandering wombs. My masters was about the ancient Roman poet Ovid's work *Metamorphoses*, which is a really long collection of stories all about the mutability of bodies and the effect that changing bodies has on people's lives.

How I chose my dissertation topic is a bit of a tale. I'm technically a US historian by training, but I've always been interested in the seventeenth century. It was a time of political and religious upheaval in England, empirical science was gaining credibility in the Western world, empires were rapidly expanding ... and it was when the English began to import slaves into its American colonies. I didn't have much interest in doing a dissertation in the English colonies that would eventually become the United States, so I looked farther south and found there the most important English colony of the seventeenth century: Barbados. And one cannot study Barbados—the first English colony in the Americas to be a “slave society” and have a demographically dominant population of enslaved people—without studying slavery. And because I like to study the body, it made sense to look at how

the English thought about the human body and, more broadly, how they created, maintained, and understood difference.

What do you do with your history?

I have used history and the tools of studying history in so many capacities. At the most basic level, I have taught history as a supplemental instructor at the University of Texas. My class, which was a general survey of US history from 1492 to 1865, focused mainly on the intersection of indigenous people, black (both enslaved and free) people, and the different groups of European imperial nations that set up colonies in the Americas.

Beyond that, I use history in my writing and blogging about social justice. I often write about the history of slavery to provide context for the systemic racial inequality that we find throughout society today. I believe that history provides a context that cannot be accessed in any other way. It often gives us the Why that we are so desperately seeking as we try to understand how social injustice exists in so many corners of our world.

Why study history?

Because the past is ever-present. I just heard Dr. Ashon Crawley give a talk at a conference and he discussed embracing the tools of new digital media in our search and struggle for social justice. He emphasized how important it is for us, as we think about the future, to make sure we reach back into the past and bring all the lessons of the past, all the social justice tools and movements, along with us. He was pushing hard against the idea that we inevitably do better as people and as a society simply by moving forward in time. Instead, he encouraged us to stop thinking of progress as a purely linear phenomenon and recognize that social justice will be achieved when we grab hold of the idea that justice will be because justice always has been.

On some level, this is a challenging thought to a historian who works in a field that often demands a linear understanding of history and places an emphasis on change over continuity. But I am not just a historian. I am a social justice activist. And it was in Dr. Crawley's words that the intersection

of the study of history and the practice of social justice came together: it is important not just to see continuity of inequality but also to recognize the non-linear progression of social justice. The former, in its pessimism, drives us to be honest about the way our world works and the latter, in its optimism, makes us part of a longstanding, though bumpy, story of hope and possibility.

What do you think is the future of history and the way we engage the past?

As someone who spends a fair amount of my time on the Internet creating communities through all kinds of social media (Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, multiple blogs, a podcast, etc.), there are a few things I'd like to see in regards to how we engage the past as we move forward with these new (and other emerging) technologies.

1) I think academics should embrace the way that communication is changing because I think they play an important role in public discourse. We need academics in these social media spaces, lending their expertise to larger cultural conversations about which they are experts.

2) We need to better integrate new media into the classroom setting, bringing in all the amazing digital tools that give students access to primary sources, both written and visual. This will not only expand how students do history but it will bring history into a realm with which they are already familiar—the internet.

3) Finally, we need to consider other publishing spaces outside of those that are historically academic. The internet has allowed a plethora of voices on a lot of different sites. You can be published in a wide range of outlets that didn't even exist a decade ago but now reach of thousands, if not millions, of readers throughout the world. Getting your expert voice onto a platform like Al Jazeera, Salon, The Atlantic, Forbes, etc., not only shows the utility of the work professional historians do, but also broadens your audience unlike any other way. As liberal arts departments struggle to find financing and remain relevant culturally, new media provides ways to do so. We need to embrace them.

Chris Cantwell

Assistant Professor, University of Missouri-Kansas City

Who are you and where are you from?

MY NAME IS Chris Cantwell and as of this fall I am an Assistant Professor History at the University of Missouri-Kansas City where I'll be teaching public history and religious studies. Before joining UMKC, I was the Assistant Director of the Dr. William M. Scholl Center for American History and Culture at the Newberry Library in Chicago where I administered scholarly programs and curated a handful of digital publications.

Most importantly, however, I am a hardy son of Heartlandia, that broad swath of rust and tilled black soil most people like to call the Midwest. Raised between the cornfields and shuttered factories of central Illinois, educated amidst the tall pines and bitter winters of Wisconsin's northwoods, and currently residing in the humidity-ridden Missouri River valley, I am a historian who takes seriously the relationships between a people and their place.

How did you become a historian?

Growing up, my grandparents would always cart my sister and I across the country in their immaculate Chrysler to see sites my grandfather believed—or had been taught to believe—were historically “significant.” These travels always took us eastward, for historical significance was apparently not a virtue of the Midwest, and inevitably ended at some Civil War battlefield, national museum, or boyhood home of some president.

But what I remember most about these trips were the stories Grandpa would share as he sped down federal highways, burning through pack after pack of Marlboros. The son of Appalachian coal miners, Grandpa spent the entirety of his adult life working in an auto factory after migrating to northern Illinois in the 1950s. Grandpa would regale my sister and I with tales of his parents buying food with script at the company store, or he'd brag about an entrepreneurial fellow autoworker who would

more than double his take home pay by raffling off his paycheck at the union hall. Grandpa never called these stories ‘history.’ But it was in traversing the interstitial spaces between the monuments we visited and the memories Grandpa shared, between the heartland where history lay and the east coast where heritage was preserved, that I became interested in the past.

Why did you choose what you research?

I kept two things from Grandpa's estate after he died: a pair of gold UAW cufflinks the union gave him for thirty plus years of dues-paying loyalty, and a certificate of recognition for perfect Sunday School attendance from the socially, politically, and theologically conservative Southern Baptist Church he attended. The juxtaposition of these two institutions might seem contradictory given the prevailing stereotypes of American political life, but the congregation and the workplace were coequal forces in my family, which in the end was the crucible that truly forged my grandfather's worldview. Sunday morning screeds against abortion, the ACLU, or “the gays” churned alongside the UAW's own jeremiads against Reaganomics or free trade. Both could be overturned by the simple estimation my mother often offered that whenever a Republican was President, the men in her life ended up out of work.

And so I entered graduate school personally interested in exploring the interconnections between social class and religious life in America's past. I ended up determining the discipline needs to understand this intersection better as well. It's common knowledge, for example, that industrial workers heavily supported the New Deal while evangelical Protestants saw in the expansion of the federal government a sign of the end times. What this interpretive paradigm disregards, however, is how evangelical working people—and a sizable portion of evangelicals were, like the rest of the country, wage earners—navigated the political divides beneath their feet. My own contri-

bution to this emerging subfield is a microhistory I'm writing of a Bible class teacher from Chicago's West Side named Frank Wood who in the first decades of the twentieth century, self identified as a Fundamentalist while running for a number of state, local, and national offices as a member of the Socialist Party of America. Wood's curious life affords me the opportunity to resituate fundamentalism's origins away from the denominational schisms and cultural conflicts that have defined the field and toward the evangelical encounter with industrial capitalism in the urban migration of lay evangelical families from the Midwestern hinterland at the turn of the century.

What do you do with your history? (By which we mean—do you publish, are you an activist, do you teach, do you make films, etc.)

As a faculty member who entered the academy by way of a number of apprenticeships in archives, humanities councils, and cultural institutions, I've been lucky enough to do history in a number of venues for a variety of audiences. While an archival assistant at the Wisconsin State Historical Society's Area Research Center at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, I helped patrons connect with their pasts through local history research. At the Newberry I worked with a number of incredibly smart and talented people who taught me how to promote the past to the widest possible audience through digital projects. I hope to combine all of these facets of historical work in my current position at UMKC. In addition to teaching and continuing my own personal research, I'll be helping the department build up a Public History program that will hopefully be rooted in designing creative digital projects that make both students and the public collaborators in the production of historical knowledge and not passive recipients.

Why study history?

So, I decided not to answer this question. In part this is because I address this issue in answering the future of history. I don't think one can talk about the future of history without laying out what history is and why it's important, so I wonder if you could collapse the two questions in general.

But I also avoid this because I don't think there's any answer that doesn't sound inescapably hokey.

What do you think is the future of history?

There's a growing sentiment that the future of the past is online. Scholars, educators, curators, and librarians have all turned to social media and digital technology to find new ways of analyzing sources, sharing information, and cataloging the past. But I think this turn to the web is part of—or should be part of—an even more important shift toward the public. The ongoing fiscal crises and dominant economic ideologies that are rapidly remaking the myriad institutions in which the work of history is done have had far more drastic impacts upon the communities those institutions are intended to serve. I therefore simply cannot imagine a future history, academic and otherwise, that does not consider intentional and creative public engagement as important as innovation and accuracy.

As a centerpiece of the humanities, history is not “that which cannot be justified” as Stanley Fish has argued, or the “flower” to the more practical (and supposedly more employable) STEM disciplines, as the American Academy of Arts and Science's Humanities Commission recently proposed. History is humanity's lodestone, forever bending our projected upward progressions into arcs of time. The past anchors a person's identity, shapes the communities in which they live, and serves as a rhetorical weapon in nearly every political discourse. To research, share, and promote history is not about enriching the human experience or ornamenting a student's employability. It is about transmitting a set of skills that directly contribute to an individual's social, civic, and economic success. If the profession is unable or unwilling to advance this claim in the future, then my hopes for the study of the past grow a little dimmer.

Alexander Aviña

Assistant Professor, Florida State University

Who are you and where are you from?

I AM ALEXANDER Aviña, born and mostly raised in San Luis Obispo, California, with the exception of a few years lived in Michoacán, Mexico as a child. I am currently an Assistant Professor of History at Florida State University. I went to graduate school at the University of Southern California immediately following the completion of my undergraduate studies at Saint Mary's College of California.

How did you become a historian?

Looking back, I think I became a historian, or at least began to develop a historical sensibility, as a teenager in high school when I started to question and interrogate my identity. I grew up in a tight-knit, loving household with two parents from Michoacán, Mexico who came to the United States as undocumented migrants in the late 1970s. Fearing that their children would “lose” their Mexican identity growing up in the United States, they strived to teach us Mexican history and expose us to Mexican popular culture (particularly through religion and a giant TV satellite that beamed Mexican television channels into our living room). They managed to teach us a highly nationalistic (and as I later found out, a PRI—Partido Revolucionario Institucional) version of Mexican history that stressed certain essentialized cultural values that according to them stood in stark contrast to the supposed “culture-less,” materialistic and hedonistic American culture that surrounded us. Who knew my campesino parents were simply channeling José Enrique Rodo, José Martí, and Octavio Paz in their own Michoacán way?

I now understand that my parents also viewed this historical education as a weapon to defend us against the sort of racism and discrimination that we faced living in the United States. They wanted us to be proud of who we were and where we came from regardless of what a society historically based on white supremacy told us. I think their

intense Mexican nationalism and historical teachings were successful. But as Frantz Fanon reminds us, such forms of nationalism must necessarily be only a useful, tactical beginning. And that beginning primed me for later interests in history when I became the first in my family to attend college.

In college, one particular historian, Dr. Myrna Santiago, inspired me. The fact that she looked like me (quite important for a profession that still lacks meaningful and sustained diversity) and shared a similar background certainly helped. But it was her teaching of history in critical analytical fashion, from a perspective that focused on the historical agency of everyday people, which captured my attention. Her classes on gender, environmental struggles in Latin America, revolutions, and US imperialism in Latin America blew me away. And despite my idealistic belief that playing fútbol in college would easily lead to a professional career, Dr. Santiago continually encouraged me to think about graduate school and becoming a historian. With her help, and that of the Institute for the Recruitment of Teachers (IRT), I began my graduate studies at the University of Southern California. An amazing poet, Dr. Marjorie Becker, trained me as a historian.

Why did you choose what you research?

My research focuses on the twentieth-century struggles of campesinos in Guerrero, Mexico to obtain and sustain demands for political, social, and economic democracy. Simply put, they wanted to exercise a meaningful level of influence on circumstances not of their making. My book details how by the late 1960s, such demands, after experiencing military massacres and everyday forms of terror exercised by local caciques, radicalized and materialized into two separate guerrilla movements led by schoolteachers.

My family background, and in particular the struggles of my campesino maternal grandfather, led me to my research focus. In many ways, the

people of Guerrero and their struggles against injustice mirror those of my grandfather. He was illiterate, had no formal schooling, and worked for a local cacique as a sharecropper for most of his life. My parents, as undocumented migrant laborers, worked backbreaking jobs in a country that tends to marginalize them politically and socially but needs them economically. I want to chronicle the stories of such people and how their everyday struggles, in small but meaningful ways, shaped the course of modern Mexican history.

What do you do with your history?

I have published journal articles, edited volume chapters, an online annotated bibliography, and a forthcoming book; thereby meeting the standard requirements of academic history. I also teach national period Latin American history at Florida State, mostly upper division and honors undergraduate courses. I've also given talks at Florida State and at other universities.

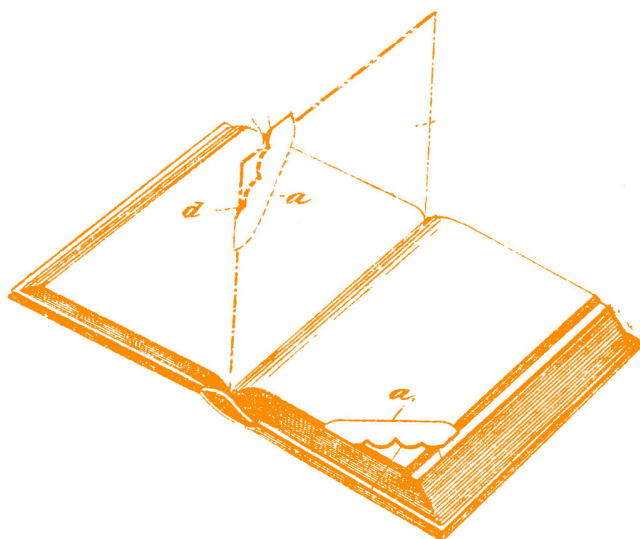
My research possesses an almost archeological impulse. For decades, the history of Guerrero's guerrillas and their campesino supporters remained buried: physically buried by the PRI's brutal counterinsurgency campaign of the 1970s

that involved torture, disappearances, and death flights; politically and historically buried by the PRI's prose of counterinsurgency that represented the armed struggles as both the work of suicidal deluded dreamers and criminal bandits. I work to unearth those struggles.

Perhaps the most personally meaningful deployment of my history/historical research occurred in May 2007 when my colleagues Adela Cedillo, Tanalís Padilla, and I screened the movie *El Violín* to survivors of the Guerrero Dirty War in Atoyac de Álvarez, Guerrero. After the movie screening, survivors and victims evaluated the film and provided their own memories and experiences. I hope that my history and research does justice to them and their struggles.

Why study history?

As a high school and undergraduate college student I studied history to elaborate an almost cultural nationalist defense against the white supremacy and Eurocentric thought structures that permeate US society at large. But now I think we need to study history for the reason that Wal-





ter Benjamin studied history: knowing the past in order to, in the words of Michael Lowy, forge “a revolutionary method for critique of the present.” It’s practically an academic and political necessity because the past continues to invade the present with vengeance. Has it ever gone away? The people of Guerrero and Juan Rulfo would respond with an emphatic no. Both my research and teaching, following Benjamin, aim to demonstrate how the emergency time we live in is the rule, not the exception; that history fails to move in linear fashion, always progressing, always moving uni-linearly toward a better future. This may seem self-evident to historians but at least with my students, their notions of time and historical movement are thoroughly imbued with nationalist narratives of triumphant progress.

Studying history in such a manner potentially teaches people how to ask critical questions and think critically about their place in a world saturated by the past; questions about power and domination, about joy and resistance, about changing the existing order of things, about the possibility of a better world. In this sense I have been profoundly influenced by both Benjamin and Paulo Freire, particularly the latter who consistently

challenged his students to critically question their place in the world they inhabit, a world always in process.

What do you think is the future of history?

This is a funny question to ask a historian. I thought history ended after the fall of the Soviet Union (insert sarcastic facial expression here). Simply put: I’m not sure. The current political attacks on the humanities in higher education and the powerful, well financed efforts to privatize even the way we teach seemingly suggest the eventual transformation of universities into utilitarian productions sites oriented toward the necessities of global capital. Apparently critical thinking skills are not needed in the modern global economy—or they are dangerous. I think I just described the world of *Blade Runner*.

In this context the study of history retains a democratic, even subversive radical potential. The Zapatistas in Chiapas say that a people with memory is a rebellious people (José Rabasa, *Without History*). I strongly agree.

NOT-SO-FUNNY PAGES

The Appendix Guide to Gertrude Bell in the Hauran

by Kevin Cannon

FOR ‘The Appendix, Appendixed’ of our last issue, “Off the Map,” contributor Kevin Cannon gave us a waggish “cartographic biography” of the Danish explorer Peter Freuchen and his peripatetic First Thule Expedition to Greenland in 1912. The project proved so rich—Cannon had to leave out Freuchen digging himself out of an ice cave with a knife made of his own excrement—that we’ve decided to make it a regular feature, leaping from continent to continent, map to map, life to life.

This issue Cannon went east, and south, for the explorations of the Englishwoman Gertrude Bell in the Hauran region of Syria in February of 1905. He explained why over email.



KEVIN CANNON

When it came time to decide what to draw for my second Appendix map, America was in a heated stand-off with Syria and it looked possible that we could be entering another long, bloody battle in the Middle East. To my embarrassment it dawned on me that I really had no knowledge of Syria’s geography or history, and I figured that it was my duty as an American to at least know something about the country we were going to invade. Fortunately the war never happened, and I can say that I’m now slightly less ignorant about this small corner of the globe.

After reading through the only book on Syria in

my local library, I stumbled on a very brief mention of someone named Bell who, according to the passage, traveled through snow during her time in Syria. The mention of snow in what I thought was a burning desert climate of course caught my attention. The Bell in question is Gertrude Bell, an extremely adventurous English woman who wore many hats in the early nineteenth century, from spy and political officer to archaeologist and cartographer. From what I could tell she took several solo trips into some of the most remote parts of Syria, which seemed a risky feat for a woman on her own at the turn of the last century. I knew then that somewhere in her travels was a map waiting to be illustrated.

Known informally now as “the female Lawrence of Arabia,” Bell traveled all over the Middle East. She’s actually most famous for her work in Iraq, but because my initial focus was on Syria I decided to flesh out her adventures based on her 1907 book, *The Desert and the Sown* (originally titled “Syria”). The title is taken from an Omar Khayyám verse about the line that separates the explored and the unexplored, and Bell definitely made it her goal to travel past the sown into the dangerous and mostly unexplored desert.

THE APPENDIX

Dangerous and mostly unexplored to the British, of course. England had a deep political interest in

the region, one that would benefitted by casting its exploration as a romantic adventure and mission—never mind the people who lived there! But why was Bell in Syria in 1905, specifically?

CANNON

By the winter of 1905 Bell was already an avid traveler and mountaineer, and she was even well acquainted with the Druze population, having explored the Hauran five years earlier. The greater goal of her 1905 journey was to visit ruins north of Damascus, although there's no way she could have passed up seeing some of the great ruins south of Damascus that she missed during her first visit there. As noted on the map, most of the ancient buildings in the Hauran were built with a dark and very strong volcanic rock called basalt, which means that the region was—and still is—littered with many ruins from the last two millennia. Armed with the maps and travelogues of the few Western men who had explored this region before her, Bell used this trip to visit as many ruins as she could, even traveling far East into the dangerous Safa to do so.

THE APPENDIX

And then?

CANNON

From Damascus Bell continued her journey north, spending a great deal of time in Ba'albek and eventually ending up in Antioch, in southern Turkey's Orontes region. When *The Desert and the Sown* was published two years later, it presented Syria and its people to Western readers, and Bell herself was placed on a short list of female explorers who described their adventures in the “imperial travel narration” genre.

Bell's interests in archaeology and politics would eventually take her to Baghdad where she helped Britain install Faisal ibn Husain as the puppet king of a new Iraqi government. In 1926 Bell would found the Baghdad Archaeological Museum, which opened two months before she died.

THE APPENDIX

Were there any great details you couldn't work in?

CANNON

In Bell's book and journal entries she describes the rich tapestry of the various populations that live and survive in the inhospitable Hauran region. As can be expected, the groups were often in conflict with each other, and Bell kept losing and adding guides as she traveled due to some men not wanting to cross certain boundaries. Bell describes all of this richly in her writings but I'm afraid that level of detail is missing from the map.

I was also surprised to find that Bell didn't write much about the role of women in the Hauran. She does describe the wives of the Sheiks in some places, but only in the context of them being guests in the tents. Maybe Bell wasn't particularly concerned about women on this trip or maybe she didn't feel it was her role to discuss it, but its absence from the greater conversation about Syria and her Druze hosts struck me as odd.



International Diplomacy (and Chocolate) in the Archives

by Corinne Wieben Lampert

I BEGAN MY FULBRIGHT YEAR in Lucca the day before my birthday. Feeling a little lonely, I decided to walk around the city and get to know the place. As I walked down Via Santa Croce toward Piazza San Michele, I saw that people were lining the fronts of their businesses and homes with tiny candles. When the sun finally set, the city sparkled with thousands of flickering lights. The façade of San Michele lit up with candles and torches of its own and shone its light on the crowd that had gathered in the piazza for the procession of the Holy Cross. That night, I shared the centuries-old tradition of Lucca's Luminaria with tourists and townsfolk alike.

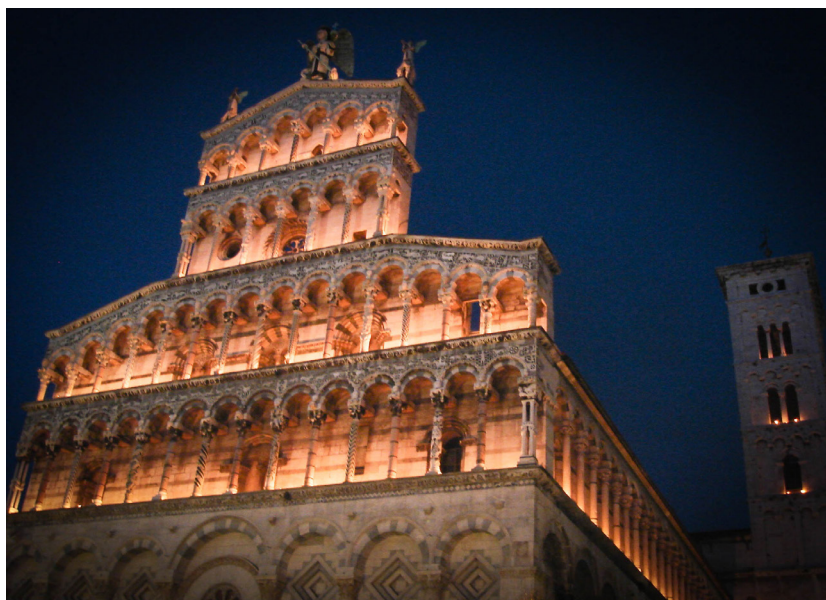
Lucca is a medium-sized city between Florence and Pisa. These days, it is generally known for its *centro storico* and distinctive Renaissance walls, which have since been converted into a park and recently celebrated their five hundredth anniversary. Lucca is also the focus of my current research, which relies on a collection of documents in the Archivio Storico Diocesano, the episcopal archive of the city. In 2005, I won a pre-doctoral Fulbright fellowship, which gave me a year in which to explore collections, develop my dissertation, and learn the strange and mysterious art of digging for undiscovered treasure in historical archives.

In a way, I made an earth-shaking discovery before I even entered the archives. Over the weekend, I had received a call from my advisor asking if I had seen the headlines; there was a story about Lucca that I should see. Turning the corner to the newsstand, the headline struck me immediately: "Lucca, Monsignor Arrested for Receiving Stolen Goods." The night of the Luminaria was also the night authorities arrested Monsignor Giuseppe Ghilarducci, director of the episcopal archive of Lucca and priest of several local parishes, for receiving sacred objects stolen from museums and churches in Rome, Viterbo, Terni, Naples, and other Italian cities. The article listed altar cloths, vestments, kneelers, chalices, and a small marble altar among the hundreds of stolen works of art discovered in the episcopal palace of Lucca and churches in Mons. Ghilarducci's parishes of Vetrano, Colognora Pescaia and Celle di Puccini. I had planned on starting my research the next day, but now I wondered about my letter of permission from Mons. Ghilarducci. I was already in over my head, and I had been in Lucca for less than a week.

The following day, I entered the episcopal archive and introduced myself. The archivist, a small, middle-aged, and impeccably dressed woman, greeted me with a harried expression that was understandable under the circumstances, and introduced me to Mons. Ghilarducci. I had read in

the newspaper that he had been placed under house arrest, but I had failed to grasp that his "house" was the episcopal palace, which contained the episcopal archive.

Over the next few weeks, I learned the skill of making small talk in a foreign language while ignoring the only topic of interest in Lucca. I also learned, to my relief, that Mons. Ghilarducci was not some villainous cleric from a Dan Brown novel. While I cannot excuse anyone's ownership of stolen artifacts, he insisted to the



Chiesa di San Michele in Foro, Lucca, 2005.
Corinne Wieben Lampert



Autumn trees growing atop the ancient and remarkably preserved city walls of Lucca.
Jscarreiro/Wikimedia Commons

authorities and the press that he had bought the items in good faith. It was hard to condemn this earnest and soft-spoken seventy-year-old priest, and soon the charges surrounding Mons. Ghilarducci ceased to define him. Out of curiosity, I looked up his work only to find that he was responsible for a number of articles and an edited collection of eleventh-century manuscripts from the episcopal archive. He asked about my work and suggested collections that might be helpful, and I grew to see him as a real person and a fellow scholar.

More than once I wondered if this was the kind of diplomatic endeavor Senator Fulbright had in mind.

In 1945 U.S. Senator James William Fulbright of Arkansas proposed a bill to use the proceeds from sales of U.S. war surplus to fund international exchange. On August 1, 1946, President Truman signed the bill into law, effectively creating what would later become the largest educational exchange program in history. The Fulbright program now operates in over 150 countries worldwide and has aided over 120,000 U.S. and 200,000 foreign scholars since its inception. It is overseen by the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), which still largely bills the Fulbright program as a diplomatic effort. I am sure the ECA conceives of this effort primarily as exchange between scholars in international

settings, but there is something to be said for the exercise of international diplomacy in the small world of regional archives.

The Archivio Storico Diocesano di Lucca does not easily let visitors forget its history or its owner. It resides in the episcopal palace in Via Arcivescovado, just across from the Duomo di San Martino. The cathedral, begun in 1063 by Bishop Anselm—later Pope Alexander II—and given a gothic overhaul in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, casts an imposing afternoon shadow over the Palazzo Arcivescovile. The palace itself is the result of a fourteenth-century foundation with expansions in the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, accessible through a grand fifteenth-century wooden door by Jacopo da Villa. The palace and adjacent archive might blend into the surrounding structures if it were not for a prominent arcade on the balcony of the *piano nobile*. It is impossible to walk between cathedral and palace without having some sense of the grandeur of Lucca's medieval and Renaissance past.

After entering through da Villa's portal, a courteous, if officious, administrative assistant directs scholars to a cramped, antique elevator. On the second floor, the interior of the archive only reinforces the impression of history. After leaving their bags in lockers in the hall, scholars can walk, blissfully unencumbered, into the archive's reading room. A beautiful electric chandelier and the

daylight that comes streaming in from the high windows along one wall light this room. The walls are covered in a rich, dark red that compliments the long wooden tables that serve as desks. Bookshelves full of inventories line the walls and frame the archivists' desk at the front of the room. Despite the efficiency of its administration, this is no sterile, modern library.

In this room, I learned one of my most valuable lessons as a scholar: befriend the archivists. A scholar in any archive—especially a smaller regional one like an episcopal archive—is more or less at the mercy of the archivists. They have access to the manuscripts, and no one is a better source of information on inventories or uncatalogued collections that might be helpful. They are also human beings, which can be frightening when you

realize how much power they have over the successful completion of your research.

In this respect, chocolate can become an invaluable research tool.

I discovered this handy fact one day when I requested the next volume in a series I had been reading. The archivist shook her head sadly and told me that it was impossible. I asked why, imagining that perhaps it was under seal of confession, catastrophically damaged, or lost. I was surprised then when she said she could not bring it to me because it was on too high a shelf. I asked if I could come with her to help, and she kindly led me up to the attic. Yes, the attic.

As I climbed up the stepladder to reach the volumes I needed, I could not help but wonder about the effects of a centuries-old attic space on the huge stacks of parchment and paper on the shelves. I soon learned that a leak had already done its work. The roof had, of course, since been repaired, but not before it had damaged several late medieval codices on the top shelves.

Between an archivist who could not reach the top shelf and the damage wrought by a leak, I realized suddenly what a particularly human endeavor it is to work in an archive like this one. Since the episcopal scribes first produced them in the 1340s, the codices I was reading had been handed down from one set of keepers to the next. All of them have had to contend with threats ranging from wars and natural disasters to bookworms and leaky roofs.

Every scholar who consults these records and every individual and scribe whose stories and efforts they preserve owe thanks to this unbroken line of custodians. I thanked mine with chocolate.

No scholar produces in a vacuum. Our acknowledgment pages are filled with thanks for our mentors, our colleagues, our fellow researchers, our students, our benefactors, and, often, the priceless archival staff who

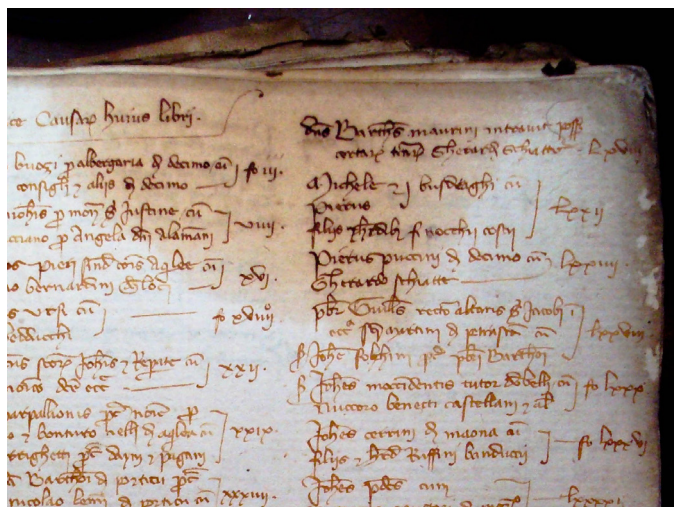


The Archivio Storico Diocesano di Lucca as it appeared in Pierre Mortier's 1640 map of Lucca and today.

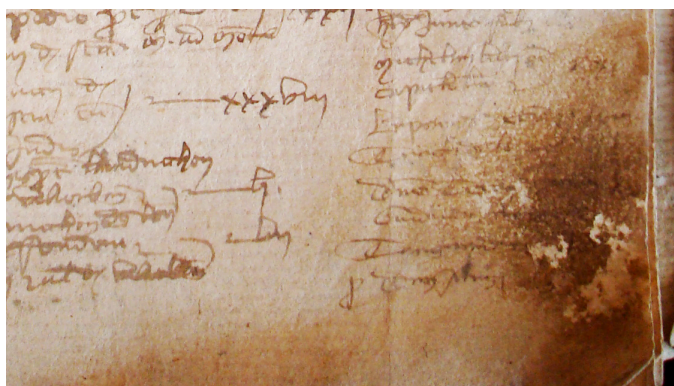
helped us through those first difficult days digging through a new collection. Describing the purpose of the Fulbright program in 1983, Sen. Fulbright said that international scholarly exchange “can turn nations into people, contributing as no other form of communication can to the humanizing of international relations.” Sure, bringing a box of chocolates to the archivist who let me into the attic may not be exactly what Sen. Fulbright had in mind when he envisioned a grand program of diplomatic and scholarly exchange, but he did grasp how real diplomacy works. It is easy for us to think about the practice of international exchange as an act performed by nations rather than individuals, but individuals give faces and voices to their nations. These experiences transformed the episcopal archive from a faceless institution to a group of dedicated scholars who shared my love of the past and my desire to preserve it.

When I returned to the archive in 2007 the archivists teased, “Dove sono i nostri cioccolatini?” Where are our chocolates?

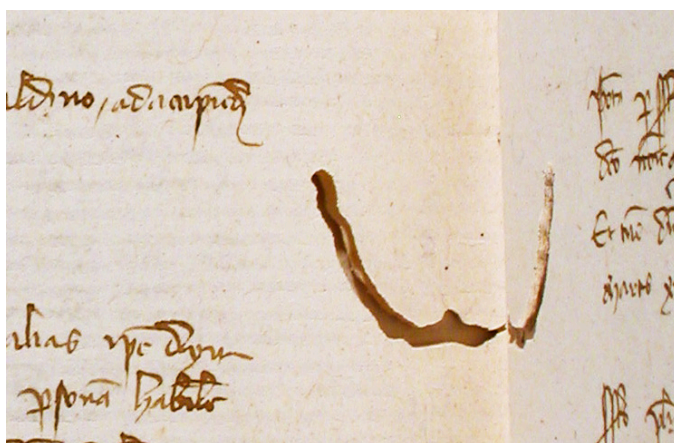
I promised that next time I would come properly equipped for archival research.



Folio with water damage.



Folio corner damaged by skin oils.



Codex damaged by a bookworm.
Archivio Storico Diocesano di Lucca,
photos by Corinne Wieben Lampert

All Soul's College, Oxford.
Benjamin Breen, 2006

Three Poems

by Molly Brodak

“THIS IS HOW selves work; they hover/ over their border,” writes Molly Brodak. So too do these three elegant, austere, vivid poems hover between past and present.

We at The Appendix were intrigued by Brodak’s oblique poem about the discoverer of microscopy for Guernica, and asked her if she had any other works that might tie in with our “Digs” theme. She wrote back with three poems that brilliantly evoke the past as foreign country. Each of these poems is concerned with a kind of

burial—the death of a geologist, the artifacts left by “the people before,” the “romance of bones” at a saint’s tomb. Yet they also hinge on transformations. “Spikes of stars and blank ribbons waving from mouths/ across the Apocalypse Tapestry” find new life “as floor mats, horse blankets, frost wrap/ for the orange trees,” and “girls’ gold-locked skull parts” are patched with replacements from “mastiffs/ and old men.”

In Brodak’s poems, burial becomes transfiguration, and the past is never really put to rest.

Fossil

Having turned away from the present, a mood slides over and locks.
A vivid personhood folds him in. A halo as in an eclipse.
Knowledge is funny how it can just eat you up:

having named eras longer than any wholesome human projection,
and compressed extinctions into black threads,
and eaten a nice meal at All Souls College,

(the organ testing its high silver pipes,
thinking of the weird smear of blonde on the nude girl
he'd seen split apart in the operating theater)

John Phillips tumbles down some stone steps and dies,
concussing, his soft body softening further
on the edges of the granite,

erasing, in a way, a fish in reverse,
the special fleshy hope-lumps—no, need-lumps
of this one body peeling in edible sheets,

down down, Mesozoic, Paleozoic,
spines, no spines, eyes, no eyes,
club mosses, liverworts, hornworts,
spiral axils, spores, reefs of sponges, algae,

boiling air and hard braids of wind,
sunshine,

sun



Red

A bee sticks the young king's hand for the first time.
Alone on a slope where apples are rotting
under boughs in a sweet acid smell

and he'd like insects to cover him
for the effect it had on the other children. In rain
minnows feel the pond grow.
The barb shot like a spray of grey dimes
on their thin sides looping off in him
like electrons in gel. A sheet of navy blue
dread buckled in his gut. Saw just the face

of a naked woman. An intermittent push of wind
is seen in branches but not felt. Artifacts.
It is true you are sometimes not yourself.



The Apocalypse Tapestry, Château d'Angers, 1377-1382. (Wikimedia Commons)

That is how selves work; they hover
over their border. Here death,
atop a green horse, is stitched newly as a corpse

against word-red ground and turquoise brain clouds,
the spikes of stars and blank ribbons waving from mouths
across the Apocalypse Tapestry,

cut apart when the Revolution came
& used as floor mats, horse blankets, frost wrap
for the orange trees.

Remember
for yourself. Rifle
around the morphic field.

The people before always leave weapons,
often, accidentally, failures of future-thinking.
And vessels. Unfailing, forever. Below him are vessels,
ceremonial blades of blue-grey hornstone,
unnotched ovate-triangular cache blades,
bone knappers and plummets, axes,
copper awls, celts and points, and vessels,
vessels all the way down.



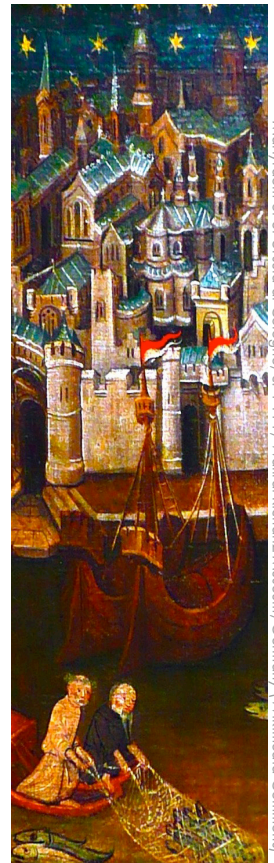
Recognitions

Don't go to the romance of bones.
It is lazy.

And fake. That joy-crimp in the trunk is pity.
And fake.

A whole trove upturned from a burial ground
under St. Ursula's,
a jumble matrix of 11,000 virgin martyrs
invented in a small mark

of a tired monk
misreading eleven virgins beheaded
or an eleven year-old virgin beheaded
or Ursula *cum militibus* with soldiers
for Ursula *cum milibus* with thousands.



Martyrdom of St. Ursula at Cologne, c. 1411, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Germany [Wikimedia Commons]

One dim wrong
& buried things are lit.
Regular dead find their fine grey ribs
knit into neat rows above the altar
and their serif-edged femurs spelling
messages to the Virgin Mary,
trimmed in garlands of vertebrae
like fossilized rosebuds:

a wall like a plate to print
sour alms on air.

Hung in comic grief over the girls' gold-locked skull parts—
some very certainly from
mastiffs
and old men—

all capped in velvet ribbons, these silly daydreams.
Unbearable dreams.

And all of heaven made into a small fingerbone.
Small, because we are small.

Big feelings
are handled in tokens.

You hope you are remembering something
when you see it.
Come back
from there.

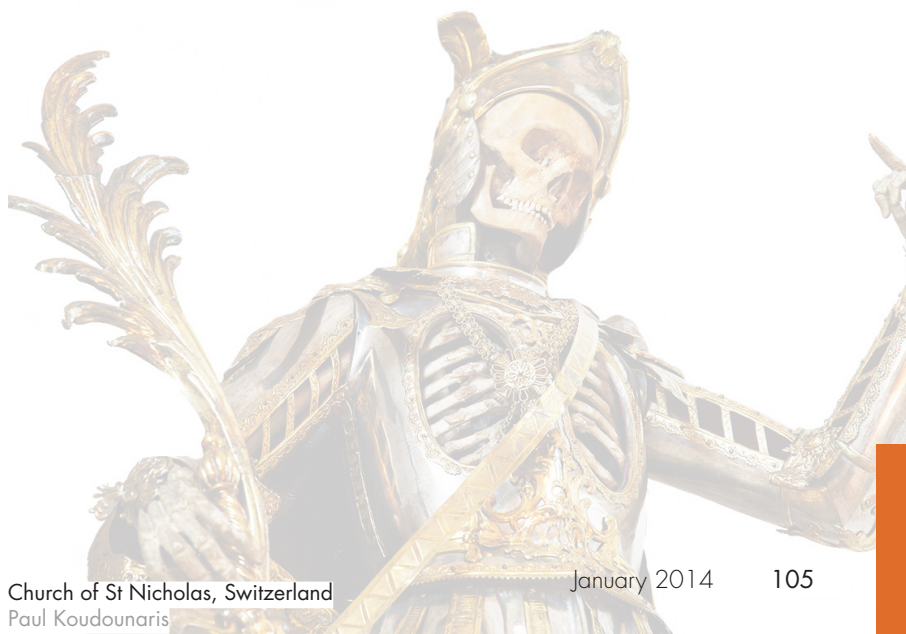
You'll never find
the past.

When you do find it,
you'll see

no one's
there.

Not even the you

you still
hope
to meet



CHAPTER 3:

Nice Digs



“One of the Damnedest Trampling Matches You Ever Saw”: When Archaeologists Talk Trash

by Christopher Heaney

*private - not fit for a lady to read,
Erdis*

ONE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN an office and an archaeological dig? When you punch out of the office for the day, your nemesis co-workers don't follow you home to the tent you share, throw themselves down in the cot opposite, and write angry letters about you while you sleep.

Poor C. Frederick Westerberg. Peru should have been such a wonderful adventure. In the spring of 1914, a year after graduating from Yale University's School of Engineering, Westerberg had gotten a job as a topographer on Yale explorer Hiram Bingham's fifth expedition to the Andes. Perhaps Westerberg hoped that some of Bingham's glory would trickle his way. In 1911, the explorer had followed a series of local guides to a steep set of Inca ruins named Machu Picchu, whose revelation earned him fame, funding from the National Geographic Society, and a fight over Machu Picchu's artifacts that nearly ended Bingham's career (and would haunt Yale for nearly a century). Bingham was nothing if not interesting, and at the very least Westerberg would have looked forward to a fascinating season of sighting and charting the heart-stoppingly beautiful landscape around Cusco, the former capital of the Incas.

It did not work out. Despite his slightly superior attitude, Westerberg couldn't speak Spanish and was at a loss in Peru's highland cities. He got altitude sickness almost immediately. He preferred eating Peru's delicious chocolate

to working. He slept in on the expedition's dime. And he might have gotten away with it had he not been partnered with Ned Anderson, a harder-working topographer who cursed like a sailor and wrote letters so salty that their field leader, Ellwood C. Erdis marked them “Not to be read by a lady.”

Anderson hated Westerberg, and the excrement hit the fan, so to speak, in October, after Anderson wrote to Erdis to demand more envelopes and alcohol, and to complain that he felt “a little better but the shits keep up with the same enthusiasm.” Despite his own earlier tummy troubles, Westy failed to give Anderson any TLC, and as anyone who has traveled knows, there is nothing like a bad stomach and worse company to make you hate the world. Anderson was no exception. While Westerberg hung around camp, milling chocolate, Anderson got back to work, and his resentment of the Yale man seethed until he wrote to Erdis to ask for more supplies and, in a torrent of early twentieth-century obscenity, bitch about “Westy.”

Thanks to Erdis, who kept the letter, and Yale's Manuscripts and Archives, who provided it to The Appendix for publication, Anderson's poison pen is preserved for posterity. For this issue's Open Source, we share with you one of the funniest, angriest, epistolary meltdowns that we know, in which an archaeological dig gives way to personal digs and one co-worker warns that the other—"that bastard"—better be sent home because "I am sure going to trample on his face."

As always, we hope you enjoy.



private—not fit for a lady to read,
Erdis

Guaynopampa
Oct 15, 1914

Dear Colonel,

We are right in the same place and will be here for another week. I was on my back for a week then it took another week to get the triangulation done but now things are going along beautifully and we can cover a large area from this camp.

The boys are out of grub and as we can buy nothing here, except sheep and mighty few potatoes I have had to send [Justo] into Cuzco. My cash has given out.

I have written a letter to don Cesar asking him to give Justo the stuff they need from the store and also ten soles (\$10.00) for stuff they have to buy in the Plaza.

If you meet Justo I told him to give you both letters so that you can fix things up the way you think best. In case you give Justo the money charge it up to me and I will sign for it when you come out.

As per my last letter we will need one food box, one case kerosene, one gallon alcohol and some envelopes, the latter are personal, and please get the large square Spanish type of critter.

For the love of Mike don't you want to do me a favor. Take advantage of that telegram and send Westy home. He is more than useless here and if he stays [p.2] much longer I am sure going to trample on his face. All the time I was in

bed with a fever of 102° that bastard staid [sic] in bed nearly all the time and never even offered to get me milk or anything. Then when I started the triangulation he didn't offer to help a damn bit but hung around camp and didn't do a damn thing. He has started work today but from the spirit that he goes at it I will certainly not let his maps go in on my section.

We had an argument the other day and I told him he ought to get a job as rear chainman and get some of his ideas changed especially his damned laziness and also his idea that he knows a little more than anyone else. He hasn't [sic] spoken to me since thank Christ. It is a relief not to have his mutton headed notions being [...] sprung on a helpless public.

I am serious in this for I can do more and better work if he is out of here. I asked him to keep notes for me for some star work the other night and he said he didn't mind if I didn't work too late as he wanted to go to bed and the bastard hadn't been off his ass all day long.

If he stays here I am going to make him fight and I will try my best to kill him. [p.3]

It isn't any crime to kill a dog especially a low lived, lazy, shiftless son of a bitch like this one.

He lays in bed after the alarm goes off and rather than make my mouth filthy by asking him to get up I get up and get it myself. Also all the week he was loafing in camp milling chocolate all day long he never even offered to cook supper.

It is only for a little while longer and by keeping his helper I can get along fine. His helper even is getting disgusted and the other day asked me if W. wasn't afraid of wearing out his ass as he hasn't even got off it for ten days.

He didn't even take enough interest to ask what peaks I was using or anything.

If you want to avoid one of the damndest trampling matches you ever saw please for the love of Mike take this son of a bitch out of here.

Outside of all this everything is all right.

Yours truly
Ned Anderson

THE PERUVIAN EXPEDITION OF 1914-15

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF

YALE UNIVERSITY AND THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

HIRAM BINGHAM, DIRECTOR

PERMANENT ADDRESS

DRAWER A, YALE STATION
NEW HAVEN, CONN., U.S.A.

FIELD ADDRESS

CARE CES. LOMELLINI & CIA.
CUZCO, PERU

Guaynabampa
Oct 15, 1914

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The boys are out of grub and as we can buy nothing here except sheep and mighty few potatoes I have had to send him into Cuzco. My cash has given out.

I have written a letter to Don Cesar ordering him to give Juanito the stuff they need from the store and also ten roles (\$20.00) for stuff they have to buy in the Plaza.

If you must Juanito I told him to give you both letters so that you can fix things up. The way you think best. In case you give Juanito the money charge it up to me and I will sign for it when you come out.

As for my last letter he will send me food for me, one can beer, one gallon alcohol, and some moonshiners, the latter are personal and please get the large square Spanish type of crutcher.

In the line of Nicki don't you want to do me a favor. Take advantage of that telegram and send Winty home. He is worse than useless here and if he stays

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2

Much longer I am now going to tangle in his face. All the time I was in bed with a fever of 102° that bastard stood in bed nearly all the time and once even offered to get me milk or anything. Then when I started the triangulation he didn't offer to help a damn bit but hung around camp and didn't do a damn thing. He has started work today but from the spirit that he gives at it I will certainly not let his maps go in on my return.

We had an argument the other day and I told him he ought to get a job as our Chairman and get some of his ideas changed especially his damned laziness and also his idea that he knows a little more than anyone else. He hasn't spoken to me since thank Christ. It is a relief not to have his mutton headed notions being forced upon a helpless public.

I am anxious in this for I can do more and better work if he is out of here. I asked him to keep notes for me for some star work the other night and he said he didn't mind if I didn't make too late as he wanted to go to bed and the bastard hadn't been off his ass all day long.

If he stays here I am going to make him fight and I will try my best to kill him.

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3

It isn't any crime to kill a dog especially a
small, lazy, shifty sort of a bitch like
this one.

He puts in bed after the alarm goes off
and rather than make my mouth full by asking
him to get up I get up and get it myself.
Also all the while he was staying in camp
swilling chocolate all day long he never even
offered to cook supper.

It is only for a little while longer and
by keeping this helper I can get along fine.
His helper man is getting disgusted and the other
day asked me if W. wasn't afraid of mearing
but his ans. as he hasn't been off of it for
ten days.

He didn't even take enough interest to ask
what peaks I was away or anything.

If you want to avoid one of the damndest
tramping matches you ever saw plan for the love
of milk take this am of a bitch out of here.

Aside of all this everything is all right

Yours truly
Red Anderson

The Prison Palimpsest:

A Former Tour Guide Looks Back at Eastern State Penitentiary

by Kate Duffy Osheim



AT WORK WE NOTICE a mummified cat. It arrests in a pile of paint chips and splintered wood in the wreck of the prison warden's quarters. The other tour guides and I venture across floorboards to marvel at it, a husk of skin rippling over tendons and ribs.

We are here, and the cat is here, because more than 200 years ago, a group of Philadelphian reformers had a utopian vision of how prisons should be run. They designed a new penal system based on the principle of separate confinement: the isolation of prisoners from the outside world and from each other. In 1829 they opened Eastern State Penitentiary to put their ideas into practice. Nothing turned out the way they had intended, and today the prison survives in a state of ruin as a heritage site. Clues as to how the system unraveled are written into the structure itself, in the off-kilter rays of cellblocks, in shivs turned up in molding cells, in tunnels dug by would-be escapees. The palimpsest is legible to those who care to read it. It tells a story of ideals chipped away over time, the death of a dream.

The first prisoner arrived at Eastern State Penitentiary on October 25, 1829. A young African-American man from Harrisburg, Charles Williams had come to serve two years for burglary.

What thoughts crossed Williams's mind as he caught sight of the penitentiary's gothic, castle-like facade, a structure described as "grave, severe, and awful"? He entered through its only door to the outside world, an oaken gate with iron rivets that weighed several tons and was said to be "the most imposing in the United States." Once inside, Williams submitted to an inspection: the prison clerk jotted down such details as his complexion, stature, and the length of his feet. Williams then received his plain prison garb and a new identification: Prisoner #1. Before escorting him to his cell, a staff member drew a hood over his head, the better to confuse any later escape attempts.

Prisoner #1 found himself in a locked room designed to minimize his contact with other people. He received meals of mush, meat, and potatoes through a slot in one wall; sun through a small



Al Capone's cell block reconstructed at Eastern State.
Elena Bouvier, 1998

skylight called the “dead eye”; and exercise in his own little walled yard. In an era when the White House lacked running water, Prisoner #1 had a toilet and a tap. A few approved visitors stopped by from time to time—the warden, a clergyman, a craftsman to teach him the honest trade of shoe-making—but according to the rules, he would never meet another prisoner, nor would he receive letters or visits from anyone back home.

Other men and women soon followed Prisoner #1 through the medieval portcullis, convicted of horse-stealing, highway robbery, forgery, murder, and other crimes. Filed away in their own blank cells, they were intended to serve their sentences in a state of “deep reflection and penitential sorrow, leading to a moral change.”

The experiment began.

To understand how the idea of imprisoning convicts alone in their own cells for years came to seem so revolutionary, one must consider the jailhouses that came before. Eighteenth-century American jails served as holding tanks for convicts as they awaited trial. As reformers described

it, these jails mixed men, women, and very young offenders into “one corrupting mass of shameless iniquity ... He who entered their gates a novice in guilt, accomplished his education in villany.” Jail time itself was not the actual punishment. Punishment for crime tended to involve pain and public humiliation, inflicted via the whip, the brand, or the pillory.

In the view of Philadelphia’s prison reformers, this system of depraved jails and harsh penalties did little to reduce crime. If anything, it prevented convicts from pursuing honest livelihoods. Known to the community at large, the convicts faced stigma. Known to each other, they faced corruption and blackmail. The reformers believed that the old punishments should be replaced with humane and rehabilitative “solitary confinement at labour, with instruction in labour, in morals, and in religion.”

In 1787 Benjamin Rush and other civic leaders established the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons, the group that went on to build Eastern State. Their Quaker-influenced penal concept came to be known as the



The prison’s facade in the early 1830s.
C. Burton, 1831



A handwritten note found with this miniature cutlery set reads: "These were made in 1856 for Mary Anna Kaighn by a prisoner in the Spring Garden Street Prison, Philadelphia. He made them from the bones in his soup using a blade of his jack knife to make the knife blade and the rivets. Mary Anna was 8 years old. Her father, James Kaighn, was a member of the board of visitors and used to take her with him on his visits to the prison."

These were made in 1856
for Mary Anna Kaighn
by a prisoner in the
Spring Garden Street Prison,
Philadelphia. He made
them from the bones
in his soup, using a
blade of his jack knife
to make the knife blade
and the rivets.
Mary Anna was 8 years

old. Her father, James
Kaighn, was a member
of the board of visitors
and used to take her
with him on his
visits to the prison.

Pennsylvania System, defined by the principle of isolation. Isolation punished prisoners non-violently, forcing them to reflect on their crimes with “salutary anguish and remorse.” The penitentiary itself represented a total environment in which prisoners’ lives might be controlled, their behavior modified, and their entire outlook transformed.

Eastern State’s architecture reflected the reformers’ high hopes. Charged with giving physical shape to the Pennsylvania System, architect John Haviland proposed a radial plan of seven cell-blocks spanning from a central rotunda. A single guard standing in the center could watch over every corridor. Haviland also infused the prison with church-like decorative flourishes: barrel vaults, turrets, and cast iron balusters.

Visitors from elsewhere marveled at the penitentiary, one of the most ambitious public buildings in America at the time. Ultimately more than 300 prisons around the world would replicate its radial design. Eastern State’s success became a matter of pride for Pennsylvanians and the young republic. Even the wagons that carried meals to each cell came loaded with notions of post-Revolutionary national pride, bearing the nicknames Franklin, Washington, and Lafayette. As a state report put it, the Pennsylvania System, as embodied in Eastern State, was “identified with our national honor and reputation” and commanded “the admiration of the whole civilized world.”

Today people still throng to Eastern State: families, school groups, wedding parties, indie rock bands shooting music videos. During my season as a tour guide, every day brought some novel assignment. We tidied Al Capone’s cell, collected

bugs for a visiting entomologist, and hurled hundreds of Tastycakes over the ramparts for the Bastille Day celebration.

I loved the job, and in slow twilight hours I perched in a tour guide stand, falling into a kind of meditative trance. I considered the prison guards who once stood there and the strange historical process through which tour guides supplanted them. Vines rustled in the wind and shadows crept across walls.

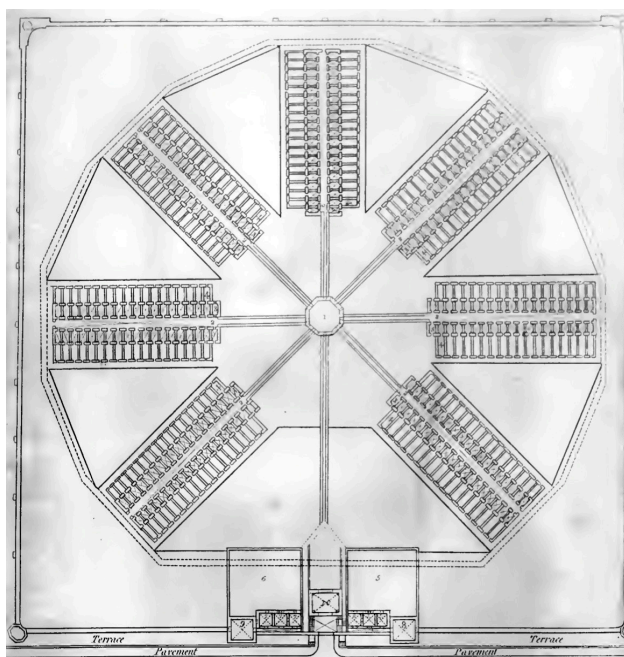
On a few occasions I spent all night in the prison, escorting groups of paranormal investigators. They appreciated the picturesque quality of the ruins, the bats swarming above, and the thrill

of exploration. Some took a technological approach, setting up camp with an arsenal of gadgets. Others preferred seances by candlelight. A few ran screaming through the cellblocks, cursing the spirits. One night I met an actual parapsychologist, a man in a black trench coat who said he worked with the Catholic Church. “Not everyone is cut out for spiritual demonology,” he told me.

I believe the prison is haunted, perhaps not by distinct ghosts one could hunt with an

Electronic Voice Phenomena detector, but by the aura of the tens of thousands of lives it held captive. The prisoners have left traces throughout the penitentiary, embellishing Haviland’s design with their own mysterious marks.

In the penitentiary’s early days, when the guards wished to punish Prisoner #50, a “notorious robber,” for idling, they removed all books and tools from his cell. He soon begged for the chance to labor: “For G—’s sake, give me a book or some work, or I shall die!” Three weeks passed, and



Symmetrical design for the radial plan.
C.G. Childs, *View and Description of the Eastern Penitentiary* (1830)



In Cellblock 8 we find an eye painted over a doorway. Guards long permitted inmates to paint their cells at Eastern State. When Charles Dickens visited in 1842, he met two prisoners who decorated their walls using colors extracted from yarn.

Kate Duffy Osheim, 2010

when at last he received his tools again, he “pursued his work with unusual industry, and never after gave cause of complaint.”

This episode illustrates how things were supposed to work at Eastern State. No one got flogged, and a robber now appeared to value legitimate labor.

But behind the walls and out of sight, the prison’s first warden, Samuel Wood, sometimes enforced a more violent system of discipline. Unruly prisoners could find themselves starved, confined in straitjackets, stripped nude and doused with cold water outdoors on winter days, strapped to the “mad chair,” or bashed over the head with wooden boards. Worst of all, inmate Matthias Maccumsey died of “apoplexy” after guards restrained him with an iron gag. Warden Wood had Maccumsey’s bruised and bloodied body carried out of the prison as night fell. The coroner conducted no inquest, and Wood advised the guards involved to “keep their own secrets.”

They didn’t. The Maccumsey story and other tales of cruelty, corruption, and debauchery began to seep out in 1834. Witnesses described a full range of “licentious and immoral” practices at the prison quite at odds with its monasterial image. A report by state legislator Thomas McElwee documented a government inquiry into these affairs, exposing the wide gap between theory and practice of the Pennsylvania System.

For matters of lewdness, the state found an ideal scapegoat: Mrs. Blundin. Little is known of Mrs. Blundin beyond her bawdy reign at the penitentiary, not even her first name, which never appears in the lengthy testimony that concerns her. She arrived with her husband Richard, who worked at the penitentiary as an underkeeper. While not officially on Eastern State’s payroll, she wormed her way into its operations, gaining access to the stores of food and drink.

For starters, Mrs. Blundin stole massive amounts of prison food. “Potatoes, bread, molasses, soap, chests of tea, coffee, rice,

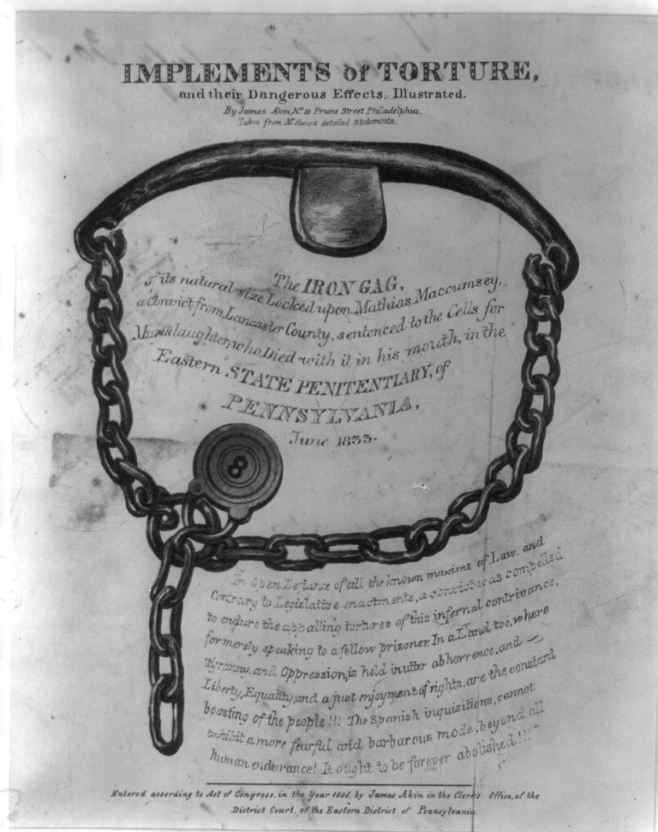


Kate Duffy Osheim, 2010. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary: gift given in memory of Peter Renc



The historic site collects the handiworks of prisoners. Here we have a model ship and a clown made out of soap.

Kate Duffy Osheim, 2010. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary: gift of Dr. and Mrs. Richard Fulmer



An illustration of the iron gag used on Matthias Maccumsey. c. 1835.
Library of Congress

The text below this illustration reads: "In Open Defiance of all the known maxims of Law, and contrary to Legislative enactments, a convict was compelled to endure the appalling tortures of this infernal contrivance, for merely speaking to a fellow prisoner. In a Land too, where Tyranny and Oppression, is held in utter abhorrence, and—Liberty, Equality, and a just enjoyment of rights are the constant boasting of the people!!! The Spanish inquisitions cannot exhibit a more fearful and barbarous mode, beyond all human endurance! It ought to be forever abolished!!!"

cream, pork, and beef disappeared, sometimes resulting in no meat for the prisoners," wrote historian Norman Johnston in his examination of this affair.

Mrs. Blundin also liked to party, holding "quilting frolics" with feasting, drinking, and dancing inside the prison for as many as forty guests. She employed male and female prisoners as waitstaff for these entertainments, and afterward the inmates could be seen wandering around the prison, intoxicated and lost. Mrs. Blundin herself sometimes started drinking before work in the morning and could be observed stumbling in a drunken daze.

Defying all nineteenth-century standards of respectability, Mrs. Blundin appears to have sought pleasure in the arms of different men at Eastern State. She was observed lingering behind bedroom doors with the prison clerk and the carriage driver. She also made "lascivious overtures" to a prisoner and offered him advice on how to escape. Prisoners complained of having to wash the Blundin family's laundry, stained as it was with the signs of venereal disease.

As for Warden Samuel Wood's authority over the penitentiary, Mrs. Blundin seems to have had little respect for it:

[The hearings] revealed that one day, under the influence, [Mrs. Blundin] told one inmate concerning the warden, "she would go up to the Centre house and _flog that damn Quaker son of a bitch!_" When she returned, she told the inmate that she had had an argument with the warden, calling him a liar, and that he had said if she were not quiet he would slap her face, whereupon she told him to kiss her arse, and that she would knock every tooth down his throat, break every pane of glass in the Center house, and then run out and holloa murder.

Why did Warden Wood permit Mrs. Blundin to upend the Pennsylvania System with her profane and intemperate ways? As Johnston

has hypothesized, the pair seem to have shared a tumultuous and possibly adulterous relationship. Witnesses observed them in suggestive situations: talking intimately, “making signs,” and retreating alone together to an empty building within the penitentiary. Said one witness: “On one occasion from the breakfast table they went to his bedroom for half an hour with the door shut.”

One reading the report cannot help but note that a number of prisoners spent significant time out of their cells. Warden Wood and Mrs. Blundin pulled inmates into personal service, laundry, and kitchen work, and in these situations the prisoners had the opportunity to interact with each other. It is also worth noting that the scandals came to light before builders had even finished constructing the final cellblock. After all the time and money spent conceptualizing and building the Pennsylvania System, Wood had failed to implement it in its pure form.

Despite the evidence against him, Warden Wood weathered the investigation and kept his place at the prison. For the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Eastern State was a project too big to fail. The committee of legislators shifted blame to Mrs. Blundin, who was dismissed, made some minor suggestions to prevent the future appearance of impropriety, then closed their inquiry. McElwee alone dissented, gathering records of witness testimony and publishing them alongside his scathing commentary about the “riotous assemblage of Bacchanalians and Cyprians” behind the walls. He did so against the wishes of the majority, thus preserving for historians this off-message record of life at Eastern State.

In the meantime the erosion of ideals had spread to the fabric of the prison. The state’s need to fit more convicts into the expensive structure soon outweighed its desire for symmetry, its will to give every prisoner an outdoor yard, and the innovation of the all-seeing central rotunda. Architect Haviland wedged as many cells as he could in blocks four through seven and gave them each a second story. When completed in 1836, the radial plan looked lopsided.

As years passed, overcrowding caused wardens to cram structures into every available space behind the walls. The increased inmate population further compromised the Pennsylvania System,

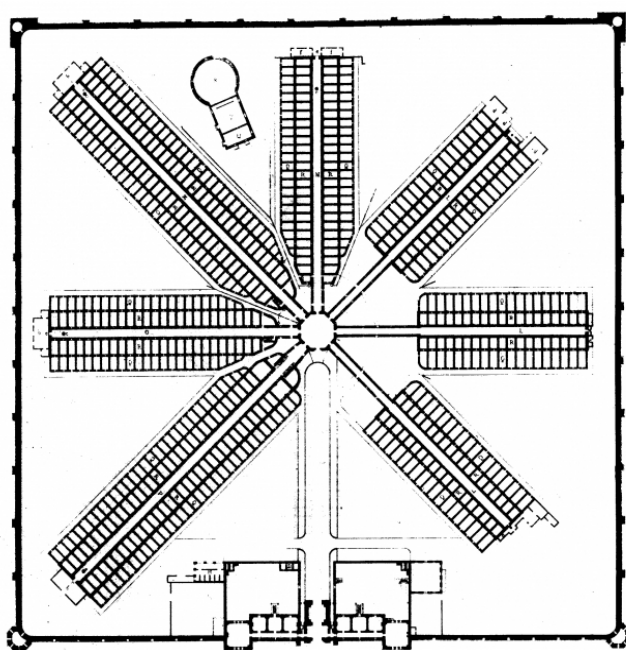
and finally, in 1913, the state officially ended its 84-year experiment in separate confinement. Eastern State Penitentiary awkwardly retrofitted to accommodate congregate workshops and dining halls.

The walled area meant to contain 266 prisoners held 1,648 in 1930. With more prisoners came more escape attempts, riots, and fights. Once famous for its optimistic reform principles, Eastern State added tommy guns to its arsenal in the 1920s and

a death row in the 1950s.



TOUR GUIDES AND MUMMIFIED cats represent the two most recent strata of history. The cat we found probably lived and died sometime after 1971, when the last prisoner left Eastern State. I heard stories about those decades of abandonment: Gary the locksmith said he met vengeful ghosts who chased him right out of the building. Others talked of the heaps of junk that ended up inside the walls. Photos from the time show the



The radial plan, lopsided upon completion.
Demetz and Bloet, 1836 Plan of Eastern State Penitentiary, 1837



Kate Duffy Osheim, 2010

prison overgrown, a jungle condensed into one city block. A colony of angry feral felines ruled the place, fed by a city caretaker known as Dan the Cat Man.

Developers called for demolition of the penitentiary: maybe leave the castle facade to preserve a bit of character, then turn the rest into restaurants, shops, or luxury condominiums. But instead, in 1988, the city handed Eastern State over to a preservation group. Maintained as a stabilized ruin, the prison opened for daily tours in 1994. It's the rare historic site that tells a story of state failure. And at last the penitentiary has achieved massive success, not as a beacon of prison reform but as a sightseeing destination.

As for the mummified cat, it joined shanks and soap carvings in the historic site's collection of artifacts. Recently it appeared on exhibit, resting on a red pillow under the words *Felis catus*. A dignified end.



CK. 1938. A grinning face. These clues etched in mortar point us to Clarence "Kliney" Kline-dinst, a skilled stone mason who did time at the penitentiary. Kliney was infamous for gaining the trust of the guards, establishing himself in the cell closest to the prison walls, then digging a 97-foot escape tunnel out to Fairmount Avenue. Bank robber Willie Sutton and a number of other prisoners joined him in this work. One of them wrote a poem about it entitled "The Leaking Pen." It starts like this:

Twelve of the boys in the Eastern Pen,
Were serving their time that had no end;
When out of nowhere there appeared a hole
Which Kliney had dug—just like a mole.

As the poem describes it, Kliney dug through cave-ins and sewer stench and met a rascally rat named Waldo. At long last, on the morning of April 3, 1945, twelve prisoners burst out of the tunnel onto the city streets. The police recaptured six the same day: "More would have made it, but someone was peeking, / Who told the Warden that his jail was leaking." In the end the escapees found themselves back at Eastern State, naked and shivering together in a punishment cell.



Facta Non Verba. Deeds Not Words. This phrase is found imprinted on the curb by the baseball diamond, a makeshift space carved out for group recreation.
Kate Duffy Osheim, 2010



Artifacts from the prison include a number of shanks.
Erica Harman, 2013. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site



The operations of my brush were entirely new and unaccountable," Catlin wrote among the Sioux.
Wikimedia Commons

Losing Face

by Erika Bsumek

In 1832, aboard the steamship *Yellow Stone*, painter George Catlin ascended the Missouri River. His goal was to encounter, document, and deliver images of American Indians for education—and profit. His companions were an edgy lot: men looking for furs to buy and land to claim.

The party stopped at the principal trading post for the powerful Sioux Nation. Six hundred families made up the village. Some five to six thousand In-

dians waited to meet the government agent, but a smaller group, who Catlin decided to paint, was less patient.

"To these people," Catlin recorded, "the operations of my brush were entirely new and unaccountable, and excited amongst them the greatest curiosity imaginable."

Before him revered Indian leaders posed. All

went well until a few unnamed medicine men warned that the portraits would cause “endless trouble.” The high-spirited leaders ignored their counsel and persevered, asking Catlin for the portraits they so desired.

But the leaders’ jocularly gave way to tension when the posing Mah-tó tchee-ga—or Little Bear—was offended by a jibe. Shón-ka, his rival who was also known as The Dog, declared that “Mah-tó tchee-ga is but half a man.”

Brief silence followed, then Mah-tó tchee-ga retorted. He demanded that Shón-ka justify his allegation. Shón-ka pointed to the artist’s canvas, where Catlin, bored with painting warriors head-on, had painted Mah-tó tchee-ga’s profile instead.

Mah-tó tchee-ga recounted his adversary’s failings in battle, and then, finishing the insult, derided Shón-ka as a “an old woman and a coward!” Shón-ka slunk off, shamed by communal laughter. Mah-tó tchee-ga, portrait complete, returned to his lodge to prepare for the anticipated altercation. But his wife, unfamiliar with the earlier encounter, had removed the bullets from his gun.

Pride wounded and animosity fueled—Shón-ka followed Mah-tó tchee-ga home, and challenged him to a duel. A bullet shattered the side of Mah-tó tchee-ga’s chin and blew his left cheek off his face. Shón-ka walked away.

Dying, Mah-tó tchee-ga lost face for the second time that day.

Catlin, blaming Mah-tó tchee-ga’s wife for the death, rode off to remember it his way.



The preceding account was paraphrased from George Catlin’s own sometimes-flowery Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of North American Indians, Vol. II, (First edition, 1844), Reprint, (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1973).



George Catlin, *Mah-tó-che-ga, Little Bear, a Hunkpapa Brave*, 1832.
[Wikimedia Commons](#)

A selection of Catlin's other paintings

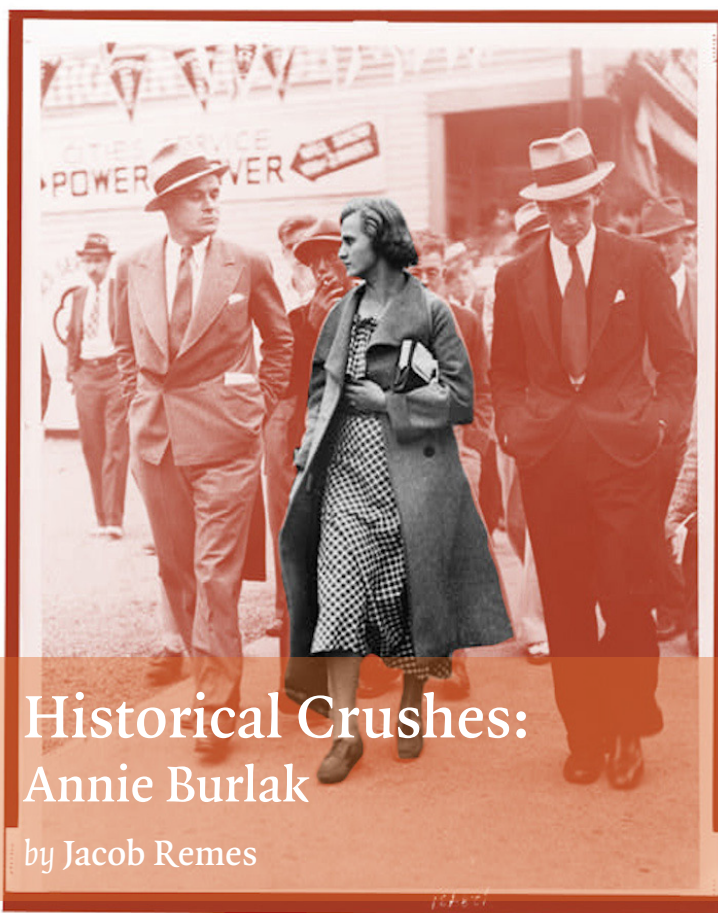


George Catlin, *Tcha-káuk-o-komáugh, Great Chief, a Boy*, 1832.

George Catlin, *The White Cloud, Head Chief of the Iowas*, 1844.

George Catlin, *Buffalo Bull's Back Fat (Stu-mick-o-súcks) Head Chief of the Blood Tribe*, 1832.

Images from Wikimedia Commons



Historical Crushes: Annie Burlak

by Jacob Remes



IFIRST MET ANNIE BURLAK when she was 22 and I was scarcely older at 28.

As they say, I didn't really pay much attention to her at first.

Sure, I noticed her as she helped out in an insurgent strike at the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company, the largest employer in Salem, Massachusetts. Who could miss a fiery Communist helping workers take back their famously quiescent union? But my glance at her was fleeting, and she wasn't really what I was looking for then. You could say that the timing didn't work out.

It wasn't until a few years later, when I was in my early 30s, that Annie really caught my eye, and I started learning more about her. There she was at age 16, getting arrested for reading the Bill of Rights. There she was in Georgia, ignoring Jim

Crow, being arrested with five others, two of them African-American, on the capital charge of violating the State Insurrection Law for speaking at an interracial workers' protest. There she was in jail, being refused access even to the *New York Times*, on the basis that it was a radical publication. There she was in Central Falls, Rhode Island, holding meetings to teach children why their parents or older siblings were on strike. There she was running for mayor of Pawtucket on a platform of social insurance, unemployment relief, and workers' rights—a platform which netted her 160 votes. And then she was arrested yet again, this time as an illegal alien; she spent a week in jail before her baptismal certificate arrived from Pennsylvania.

Wherever the Communist National Textile Workers' Union (NTWU) was—organizing around broad societal issues, recognizing how class oppression intersected with race (in Georgia) and

gender (in Salem)—Annie was there. Often, she was literally at the center of the action. Picture after picture shows her standing on a soapbox, speaking to dozens or hundreds of workers. Dorothy Day described her as “a fine strapping young girl, blonde-haired, rosy-cheeked, looking like a Valkyrie as she marches at the head of her strikers.”

Most of all, I saw her in Salem. In the 1920s, workers at Naumkeag had organized an industrial union of skilled and unskilled workers and had built power within the factory. Their union signed successive contracts that won higher wages and gave workers control over working conditions, job classifications, discipline, and seniority. At a time when many New England textile mills were moving to the American South, Naumkeag stayed in Salem. But in exchange for these gains, Naumkeag’s workers had to agree to increase their productivity. A contract in 1928 was the high water mark of their strategy. The union agreed to a stretch-out, but it won the power to control how it would happen.

The union’s increasingly autocratic business manager controlled a “joint research committee” that directed the efficiency work. The upshot of the “research” was that fewer workers would each tend more machines, and it was the married women who worked in the weaving room who bore the brunt of the layoffs under the union’s definition of seniority. Even those workers who supported the stretch-out in principle wanted more say in how it would be implemented. In 1933, workers rebelled against their union, with the help of Burlak’s NTWU. In she came to lend support, her voice, and her strategic thinking. She had a complex relationship with the local insurgent leaders—they were desperate to avoid red-baiting but also seem to have relied on her help—but she stayed there, helping rally workers and perhaps set strategy. As I learned more, I came to understand Annie and her work better. That first time I met her, I decided, I’d been wrong about her. She wasn’t helping workers take back a quiescent union, as I first understood. She was helping workers demand democratic accountability in their union, and she was pushing them, mid-strike, to become even more radical.

I never had a chance with her, of course. Around the same time I was watching Annie organize textile workers in New England, she was meeting the man who would become her husband. Not surprisingly, she met Arthur Timpson in their shared political work. But before they could wed, Arthur took up arms against fascism as a member of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. They married when he got back from Spain.



THAT WASN’T WHAT TRULY knocked me out of the running, of course. The main reason I never stood a chance with Annie Burlak was that, by the time I met her, she was dead. So it goes with historical crushes. I was reading of what Burlak did 75, 80 years later. The attractive young woman I saw in the pictures—described in the capitalist press as having red hair and wearing bright dresses, although she later described herself as blonde and favoring pastels—would today be 103 years old. Her children, whom she had to leave with friends when she went underground to avoid a Smith Act prosecution, are both older than my parents.

What does it mean to call Annie Burlak my historical crush? I first encountered her the year after my grandfather died. Slightly younger, his first arrest came in 1934, as he protested outside the German Embassy denouncing the Nazis’ “brutal murder of workers, the Jewish people, and all anti-Fascists.” He, too, had spent the 1930s organizing against white supremacy and militarism—although he mostly organized Virginia students, rather than New England textile workers. He too, much later, would have his citizenship questioned because of his politics. (Unlike Burlak, though, who died a member of the Communist Party, my grandfather became a liberal by the late 1940s, although he remained on the vanguard in fights over Jim Crow, immigration, gay rights, and D.C. home rule.) So to an extent, my warm feelings for her are about honoring my grandfather and his generation, whose choices I hope I would have had the courage to make.

But clearly I didn't have a crush on my grandfather, nor on what a friend of mine once called my "collection of leftist old men"—men like Moe Foner and Dave Dellinger whom I met and tried to cultivate relationships with, often in the few years before their deaths. Nor did I ever know the Anne Burlak Timpson of old age, singing Communist and organizing songs from her youth while she struggled with aphasia. My crush on the "Red Flame," as the capitalist press called her, is on the young Annie Burlak, making up new words to popular ditties to sing on the picket line.

It's a tricky thing for a professional historian. To speak of a historical crush is to engage in the ultimate act of historical imagination, indeed projection. What would we have done, whom would we have liked, to whom would we have been attracted, had we lived in the period of our research? Our crushes humanize the past and our subjects, even as they risk humanizing ourselves.

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Comics, History, and Drawing Admiral Nelson: An Interview with Kate Beaton

by Christopher Heaney and Benjamin Breen

Kate Beaton is a Canadian comic artist whose waggish take on historical and literary figures from Richard III to Ada Lovelace has won cultish acclaim since she started her web comic *Hark, a Vagrant* in 2007. She is perhaps the only cartoonist ever to be published by both Marvel Comics and *The New Yorker*. Beaton's often absurdist, seemingly effortless style is deceiving: her comics' humor lies in sharply-crafted progressions and punchlines that reimagine the past with barbed wit. Whether she's revisiting Robinson Crusoe from the perspective of a disgruntled Friday or lampooning the Brontë sisters, Beaton shows her originality as an historical thinker at every turn.



Needless to say, we at *The Appendix* are big fans. This past October, we talked to Beaton about her inspirations, her early work ("one of the first comics I drew was about going on a date with Admiral Nelson"), and the recent revelation that Oscar Wilde and Walt Whitman probably hooked up.

INTERVIEWER

What's your favorite historical fact or figure that you haven't worked into a comic yet?

BEATON

A lot I suppose! Sometimes you read something and make a note and never get back to it, or you try something for a few days, and know that you have to move on to a new topic because this idea is going nowhere. I would love to make a comic about Ida B. Wells—she's a hero! But she didn't have it easy. It's easier to take down the big blowhards of history with humor, less easy to celebrate the underdogs, unless the joke every time is that they kick everyone's asses or something.

INTERVIEWER

What historical figures seem like they'd make good comics but are in fact impossible to make work?

BEATON

Again, I'd say the underdogs. You don't want to make them look foolish, so you can't make fun of them really. Or you could, but you don't want to. But then you can't always make the joke that everyone else around them is foolish while they are perfect—that gets old fast. Not that our heroes are untouchable, it's just harder to turn into comedy. But, not impossible.

Also, sometimes when something really outlandish happens, it's hard to make a comic about it, because it is already funny! And you don't need to push it, it stands on its own as nutty and unbelievable and funny. It's easier to make fun of something that takes itself very seriously.

INTERVIEWER

You grew up in Mabou, Cape Breton—what's the local history like there?

BEATON

Cape Breton Island is made up of a few distinct cultural populations, but in Mabou and area it's predominantly people of Highland Scots ancestry, who left Scotland during or after the Clearances. It was an isolated area for a long time, so though I am ninth generation or so, my grandparents' first language was Gaelic. And we learned it in school, and the signs are English/Gaelic bilingual, though

CRUSOE



Kate Beaton, *Hark, a Vagrant*

that's not really necessary now. You are very aware of your own history in Mabou—your family line, where they came from, your relation to anyone in town. And there is a great cultural pride about it, not being Scottish, but being Cape Breton Gaels, is its own thing. I am not descended from great musicians, that is in other families. I used to wish “the music was in us” as they say, but I am descended from local bards, so that fits well enough, since I am a storyteller too in a way.

INTERVIEWER

History comics are a small but growing corner of the larger comic book field. How did you get into it, and why do you think it's getting so popular?

BEATON

It's funny, when I began, people asked how I discovered this “niche.” But, of course, I was just making comics, I didn't really know anything about comics, and I made what I wanted to make. Is it becoming a thing? I guess that is news to me. More likely, historical topics have always been of interest to storytellers—films, novels, shows. Comics too. Books like Chester Brown's *Louis Riel* or Nick Bertozzi's *Lewis and Clark*, you know, they're top notch.

INTERVIEWER

You worked at a maritime museum in Victoria—what was that like? Did it end up shaping your comics?

BEATON

I miss that museum! Except it couldn't give me full time. I don't miss being poor. I was the Admin Assistant, so I was put where I was needed, and got to work a little bit in all the departments. I saw how hard it is to run a museum, and how people put all they have into it, because something is always about to happen that is just going to shut the whole place down. You're bailing out a sinking ship, but you want to, you're dedicated to it. You believe in it. I think working in the museums assured me that I believe in the importance of knowing history, and sharing it. It for sure shaped my comics—I worked in three museums in different towns, all told, but I started the website when I was working in Victoria, surrounded by maritime history. I think one of the first comics I drew was about going on a date with Admiral Nelson, and



Kate Beaton, *Hark, a Vagrant*

finding out how he was missing a bunch of body parts. Very mature.

INTERVIEWER

What was the last great history you read? What are you reading now?

BEATON

The last one I read that I thought was a real page-turner was Ian Mortimer's *Time Traveler's Guide to Medieval England*. I was reading a lot of medieval history last year, but some of it was a snooze. It's not always easy to be engaging. And I recently read a fantastic biography of Roald Dahl, but I don't know if that counts as a history. I think about Robert Hughes's *The Fatal Shore* a lot, and John Keegan's *Soldiers*, I'm picking at Joseph J. El-

lis's Founding Brothers, but I'll be honest, it's been around the house for ages. I also am way into local history, so if there's a book about Cape Breton I probably have it.

INTERVIEWER

Rumors of an Oscar Wilde-Walt Whitman tryst have been swirling recently. (Apparently in 1882 they shared a bottle of elderberry wine and went upstairs to "be on 'thee' and 'thou' terms.'") That amazing mental image immediately made me think 'Kate Beaton comic.' Where do you get ideas for new work? Do you ever avoid a topic because it fits your aesthetic too well?

BEATON

Poor Oscar! Things didn't work out for him in love. I get ideas by wishin' and a-hopin'. I am always looking at something and hoping that a part of it will be retained and transformed, now or later, into a comic idea.

But there are no guarantees—without a doubt, coming up with the idea is the hardest part. I have avoided things where I think 'Oh, I've gone down this road before.' If it were really funny though, I'd probably go down again. No shame, I got no shame.

INTERVIEWER

Do you ever hear from professors or high-school teachers who use your comics in the classroom? How do you balance being educational and being entertaining?

BEATON

Oh yes, all the time! That's the best! It's so flattering—but I get it, the comics are a good icebreaker. If you are laughing at something, you already like it, and want to know more. If they're laughing, they're learning, who doesn't want to be in on the joke? You can't take my comics at face value, but you can ask, 'What's going on here? What's this all about?' Then your teacher gets down to brass tacks. Or you're an adult, and you consult Wikipedia. I'm just as happy to send people to Wikipedia, even though they don't always have their facts straight.

"Whitman opened a bottle of elderberry wine and he and Oscar drank it all before Whitman suggested they go upstairs to his 'den' on the third floor where, he told Oscar, 'We could be on 'thee and thou' terms.'... Stoddart's reminiscences accord with Oscar's later account of the meeting to his friend, George Ives. Oscar told Ives that there was 'no doubt' about Whitman's sexual tastes. 'I have the kiss of Walt Whitman still on my lips,' he boasted."

– Neil McKenna,
The Secret Life of Oscar Wilde, pp. 32-33.



Kate Beaton, *Hark, a Vagrant*

INTERVIEWER

What will it take to make that comic about Queen Elizabeth and Benkei the Warrior Monk happen?

BEATON

I already started it! I started it and a few things came up and I had to put it on hold, but I'm coming back to it, I love that nutty idea. It makes no sense, and all the sense.



Fra Angelico, *The Mockery of Christ*, 1441 (with the addition of Senators Stewart and Nye)
Wikimedia Commons

“And Raising His Hand He Gave the Finger to Heaven”: Digs and Disses Throughout History

by Benjamin Breen

SENATOR WILLIAM MORRIS STEWART was nothing if not a shrewd man. In 1850, he dropped out of Yale University and moved to California to become a gold miner. Like many savvy 49ers, Stewart soon realized that the real money and power lay in building an infrastructure to support the miners rather than digging in the dirt himself, and he became a lawyer specializing in the law of silver mining claims. He was wildly successful: attorney general of California by age twenty-six, and United States Senator for Nevada by thirty-seven.

It was at the Senate, in 1869, that he engaged in a sardonic exchange with two powerful Senators: Thomas Hendricks of Indiana and his fellow Nevadan James W. Nye (the latter had recently fired his young personal secretary, an up-and-coming writer named Samuel Clemens, for mailing prank letters to his constituents).

It's impossible to tell from the surviving transcript of the 1869 debate, which involved railroad funding, whether Stewart was actually furious or just pretending to be for comic effect. Suffice to say, his two great loves appear to be hyperbole and defending the honor and business interests of the good folk of Nevada:

Mr. STEWART. I am glad that he has not made up his mind to annihilate the State of Nevada. The people out there will be exceedingly gratified when they learn the fact that the great Senator from Indiana does not intend to do that.

Mr HENDRICKS. Oh do not crush me with your wit.

Things went on like this for quite some time. Stewart accuses his Indiana enemy of "every abomination that was ever advocated in this body, by speaking of the number of people in Nevada."

At this, the presumably witty Senator Nye jumps in:

Mr NYE. I hope my colleague will leave a little for me to do, for I want to take a dig at that.
[Laughter.]

Is this the first recorded usage of the phrase "to take a dig at" someone, used as an insult? Or an ad-libbed witticism relating to the debate's mining theme? Or both?

Hard to say, and etymology dictionaries are of surprisingly little help. One thing is for certain: authors, writers, politicians, and other makers of history have been taking digs at one another for a long, long time. Here's a sampling of some of our favorites, emphasizing lesser-known insults from forgotten backways of the past. There'll be no Winston Churchill calling people ugly here—but there will be Giordano Bruno giving Jesus Christ the finger from his jail cell in 1590s Venice. And isn't that so much better?



[Fra Celestino] says that he deposes against Giordano, because he suspects that he has been slanderously denounced by the same, and informed against Giordano in writing. He reports that Giordano has said:

...

3) That Christ is a dog cuckold fucked dog; he said that the ruler of this world was a traitor, because he could not rule it well, and raising his hand he gave the finger to heaven.

...

11. That if he had to go back to being a Dominican friar, he wanted to blow up the monastery, and when he had done that, he wanted to return to Germany or England among the heretics where he could live in his own way more comfortably and plant his new and infinite heresies there.

12. The person who compiled the breviary is an ugly dog fucked cuckold, shameless, and the breviary is like an out-of-tune lute, and in it there are many things that are profane and irrelevant, and therefore it is not worth reading by serious men, but ought to be burned.

—Claims made to the Venetian Inquisition by the "mad Capuchin" Fra Celestino against Giordano Bruno, 1593, as translated by Ingrid D. Rowland in her excellent book *Giordano Bruno: Philosopher/Heretic*, pp. 245-46.

He lays in bed after the alarm goes off and rather than make my mouth filthy by asking him to get up I get up and get it myself. Also all the week he was loafing in camp milling chocolate all day long he never even offered to cook supper.

It is only for a little while longer and by keeping his helper I can get along fine. His helper even is getting disgusted and the other day asked me if W. wasn't afraid of wearing out his ass as he hasn't even got off it for ten days.

—Ned Anderson complaining about his partner on the Yale Peru Expedition, October 15, 1914. Read more about this wonderfully mean-spirited letter in our article “One of the Damnedest Trampling Matches You Ever Saw”: When Archaeologists Talk Trash.



“If told I am a bad poet, I smile; but if told I am a poor scholar, I reach for my heaviest dictionary... The point is not that one version is better than the other (frankly, there is not much to choose between the two); the point is that unwittingly both use the same wrong person as if all paraphrasts were interconnected emphatically by an ectoplasmic band.”

—Vladimir Nabokov complaining about two rival translators missing the subtleties of an idiomatic use of the second person in a Lermontov poem in “Nabokov’s Reply,” *Endeavour*, February, 1966, pp. 80–89.



Contemporary hunter-gatherer life can tell us a great deal about the world of states and empires but it can tell us nothing at all about our prehistory. We have virtually no credible evidence about the world until yesterday and, until we do, the only defensible intellectual position is to shut up.

—James C. Scott reviewing Jared Diamond’s *The World Until Yesterday* (2013) in *London Review of Books*, Vol. 35, No. 22, November, 2013.



FINALLY, HERE’S A LETTER I found at the Virginia Historical Society in 2009. It had nothing to do with what I was researching at the time, but I was charmed by it and filed it away. The 1779 letter was signed “Downright Honest,” but attributed to a physician named Philip Turpin, mainly remembered today (if he is remembered at all) as a correspondent with Thomas Jefferson, who wrote to him about “traversing the air with balloons.”

Sir I must begin my letter to you with an apology for the liberty I take in writing to you on a disagreeable subject. Few People can bear to be told of their Faults, and for that reason often remain ignorant of them: as this may probably be the case with you, I have undertaken the friendly office of mentioning them to you.

The World, Sir, in general allows you to be an honest good kind of Man enough, but you lose the Merit of this Character by an avaricious, miserly disposition which makes you guilty of many little dirty actions quite unbecoming the Character of a Gentleman, or the station you act in. People, Sir, see through this shallow artifice, and pity and despise you for it.

If you are a Man of common sense, you will make a proper use of this friendly admonition; if you are not, it is your own Fault; I have done my duty.

I am Sir
Your most obl. (tho’ unknown) servt.
Downright Honest [Phillip Turpin, 1779]



The Most Soviet Park in Russia

by Charles Shaw

WHEN YOU THINK of emblematic Soviet buildings, you don't usually think of rabbits, but there they are, dancing and frolicking, even mating across the curved frieze of the Pavilion to Rabbit-Rearing and Fur Breeding, in a far corner of Moscow's VDNKh park. The atrium itself is fenced off by a row of impossibly skinny columns whose capitals are neither Doric, Ionic, nor Corinthian, but defiantly Soviet. The grand portico is flanked by a pair of female statues clutch-

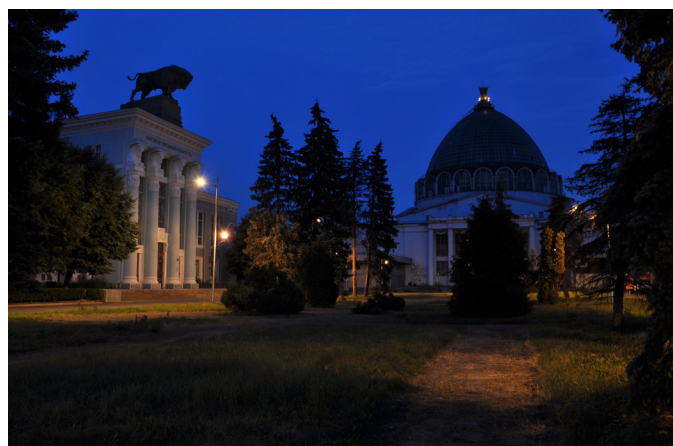
ing a pack of their furry friends against bas-relief seashell backdrops—a cross between Botticelli's "The Birth of Venus" and Our Lady of the Bunnies.

Like most of the park's buildings, the pavilion celebrates innovation and achievement in a sector of the Soviet economy that all but disappeared with the fall of Communism. In the 1990s one could actually buy rabbits at the pavilion. But today the entrance plaque is barely legible, the door is locked,



The Pavilion to Rabbit-rearing and Fur Breeding, which has seen better days.

Charles Shaw



The bull from the Meat Industry Pavilion looms over the Space Pavilion.

Charles Shaw

and the windows are opaque. Its legal status is a mystery and its façade crumbles more each year.

Neglect is just one of several outcomes for the pavilions in Russia's most Soviet park. Others have been seized by capitalism in its most unrestrained forms: live shark shows, torture and sex museums, and a fur coat megastore with free shuttle service. And though the Ferris wheel, carnival games, kebab stands, busking rock bands, kitten saleswomen, motorcycle gangs, roller skaters, and forlorn ten-meter wheat sheath in the middle of a lake can be disorienting, one of the park's main draws is the autonomy of wandering its 385 acres, many of which are forested and quiet.

Yet to understand modern Russia, where the Soviet legacy lingers uncomfortably on, there's no better place to visit than VDNKh. According to Vladimir Putin, modern Russia can best be seen in the glassy athletic venues and infrastructure being built from scratch in Sochi, the host of the 2014 Olympic Winter Games. Blank slates are certainly easy for leaving marks—as Peter the Great did in the marshlands that became St. Petersburg—but they have more purchase on the future than the present. Other Soviet sites, like Lenin's tomb, exemplify the struggle to refashion the past, but not that past's unruly and sprawling presence, which VDNKh has in spades. Its mix of solitude and tackiness preserves a spirit of guileless accessibility, making it perhaps the only major site in modern Russia to embrace the Soviet past with pride rather than reservation. At VDNKh the Soviet era cannot simply be razed like so many redundant factories; it's too beautiful and too beloved. It's also massive—too indigestible to emerge sparkling and wifi-equipped on the other side of renovation, like Moscow's Gorky Park, whose Soviet spirit has been practically erased in a seeming effort to reproduce London in Moscow. Like the Soviet past, VDNKh can be neither unified nor resolved.*

After all, what can you do with a site that is both Ground Zero and Las Vegas?

*Nor is it Berlin or Budapest, where the socialist past has turned to somber martyrdom and lightweight nostalgia.

Other Soviet symbols have been spared this uncertainty. The Moscow Metro and Stalin's "Seven Sisters" towers are too functional to be interrogated for meaning; they're simply a form of transport or the home of a government ministry. By contrast, because VDNKh is the most bricks-and-mortar monument to the Soviet past, it is also the most vulnerable. It houses its most obscure and emblematic buildings, dedicated to ideas, territories, and social groups that no longer exist, such as Friendship of the Peoples, the Uzbek SSR, and Young Naturalists and Scientists. In fact, some of the pavilions (such as Rabbit-Rearing or Peat) are almost mockingly irrelevant; their earnestness, not their agrarianness, being their most outdated and Soviet quality. Perhaps the barbarity of their destruction, the recklessness of the alterations, and the callous neglect can be explained by a sublimated revulsion against a historical mistake that was all the more tragic because it was self-induced.

There is no one narrative here; there are many individual ones. A full transformation of VDNKh would require cooperation and consensus about the Soviet legacy that don't exist in modern Russia. Instead of one elephant in a room, it's a cluster of about 80 massive stone, plaster and glass elephants, grazing in acres of asphalt and forest, each with their own post-Soviet afterlife.



VDNKh WAS THE SOVIET UNION'S best version of itself.

Like the Moscow Metro with its marble, stained glass, and chandeliers, VDNKh is a glorious-yet-bounded space where the full promise of the Soviet dream could be realized. It is a reminder that utopias can only be built in finite spaces. Without lavish restoration and maintenance, they crumble.

In Russian, VDNKh is short for "exhibition of economic achievements," or *vystavka dostizhenii narodnykh khoziastva*. This is the name that the park commonly goes by, even though in 1992 it was renamed VVTs, or "all-Russian exhibition center," despite being born and raised from 1939 to 1959 as VSKhV, the "all-Union agricultural exhibition."



The Monument to the Conquerors of Space, which stands directly outside VDNKh.

Charles Shaw

It was intended to celebrate ingenuity and effort among workers and *kolkhozniki* as well as to inspire them to further heights.

During the Soviet era, the promise of a yearly trip to Moscow's VDNKh was another incentive for greater outputs. At VDNKh, the most productive sugar beet brigades from Ukraine would be invited to share their secrets. They might mingle with a pig iron team from Magnitogorsk, tobacco growers from Georgia, and sturgeon fishermen from the Caspian Sea. Or they could take a patriotic detour to learn of the achievements within the pavilions to the Arctic or Physical Culture. VDNKh reified the Soviets' command economy into a cornucopia of fountains, columns, and promenades while affirming to Soviet laborers that in the work-state they could be expert, hero, and king.

Here entire sectors of the economy had dedicated pavilions such as the Meat Industry, with its bull's head columns, and Beekeeping, with its honeycomb-patterned entrance veil. And the great alliance between agriculture and industry was brought to life in the monumental sculpture *Worker and Kolkhoz Woman*, by Vera Mukhina, which was set just outside VDNKh's triumphal entrance gates after returning from its 1937 debut at the Paris World's Expo.

VDNKh also brought the entire multi-ethnic Soviet world to life, providing an ideologically unified analogue to the World's Fairs. National republics,



The fountain of the Friendship of the Peoples.
Charles Shaw

autonomous republics, and many Soviet regions were crystallized in architecture, ensuring that each one's essence was legible all the way down to the door handles and stained glass—a sort of Soviet monumental Arts and Crafts. For instance, Azerbaijan's pavilion featured a decidedly Islamic *aiwan*; Karelia's almost-Athenian pediment is a wood-carved scene of lumberjacks in a forest; and the Volga Region featured a massive frieze of a hydroelectric dam. While Mechanization Square was sanctified by a towering Stalin statue (where the Vostok rocket stands today), the spatial focal point is the gold-plated fountain, Friendship of the Peoples, with its ring of female figures: each of the fifteen republics dressed in her “national” costume being doused by jets of water from a giant bundle of wheat. The fountain and the pavilion of the same name instantiated the Soviet goal to integrate the Russian empire's distant and diverse periphery. It demonstrated that although the Soviet Union was closed from the world, VDNKh contained a world of its own.

And only in the workers' state could pavilions be erected without irony to the most obscure corners of the economy, such as Dog-Rearing, Agroforestry, Poultry-Raising, Camels, Donkeys, Peat, Potatoes and Vegetables, Artificial Pollination, and Flax, Hemp, and Bast Fibers.

Other pavilions were downright Dionysian, like Beer, Vineyards and Wine-Making, Liqueurs, Tea and Sweets, Tobacco, Toys, and Ice Cream, which was built to look like a giant, melting scoop of vanilla with a preening seal in place of the cherry on top. There were also plenty of cafes, simple movie theaters, and an amphitheater. With apologies to Walt Disney, VDNKh in its prime must have been the Happiest Place on Earth. Its levity didn't simply line corporate pockets nor merely brighten the faces of bourgeois children: it was proof that heaven was being built on earth.



DESPITE BEING CURATED ENTIRELY by the Soviet state, VDNKh's pavilions were not immune to the bouts of destruction that beset World's Fairs. The regime's priorities changed and the economy evolved, which were reflected in the destruction, construction, and transformation of pavilions, making the park a palimpsest of Soviet priorities. After a wartime hiatus, VDNKh reopened grander than ever in 1954 with a Cold War focus on technology. Pavilions to Atomic Energy for Peaceful Purposes (1956), Medical Industry (1957), Geology, Gas, and Chemistry (1957), and Science (1957) emerged. As the Soviet economy grew more interwoven it became difficult to separate industrial processes and products into discrete buildings, making the pavilions more like separate-but-related themes in one Soviet industrial symphony, rather than a patchwork quilt.

The utopianism of the Khrushchev years is captured in a 1959 guidebook that praised the pavilions of Chemistry and the Chemical Industry with a tribute to polyethylene, a “miraculous material” that could replace metal and be used in hoses, films, unbreakable bottles, flasks, etc. Meanwhile, a strange figure guarding the Electrification pavilion epitomized the new era:

From a distance he seems to be a visitor from the Middle Ages, a knight clad in armor. But his armor is aluminum and underneath it he lacks a beating heart, while his veins do not flow with hot blood. His heart is mechanical and his blood is electronic. He is a robot.

The “aluminum knight” greeted visitors four times a day with a humble but hopeful greeting: “Right now I can’t do much, just turn around, walk, talk...I’m controlled by radio...We robots don’t fear work, nor heat, nor cold.” And visitors who did not speak Russian could pick up a nearby telephone receiver and listen to his message in French, English, or German.

Yet VDNKh never forgot its agricultural core. The Corn pavilion had a six-meter cob tower in its vestibule and prompted a breathless ode to the “queen of the fields”:

She appears not only as a grain, doesn’t just transform into meat and milk. Processed corn appears in confectionary, canning, compound fats, textile, chemical, pharmaceutical, paper, construction and other industries. Looking at these exhibits we’re reminded that all sectors of the economy interact and complement one another.

Thus the metaphysics of corn demonstrated the growing complexity of the Soviet economy, its wager on high technology to produce the long-sought cornucopia, and the humble dignity of its agricultural base.

By the 1960s Khrushchev had declared the creation of a unified “Soviet people” that would soon live to see Communism. Differences in development and culture among the various Soviet republics were said to have disappeared, which meant the end of republican pavilions at VDNKh. And because Khrushchev launched a concurrent war on excessive ornamentation, the pavilions that weren’t destroyed—like Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan—were crudely repurposed by slapping up boards, dismantling carved friezes, or shearing off decorative entrances. Among the most freakish transformations, Kazakhstan and its elegant glass atrium became Metallurgy, a large black box. Azerbaijan became the archetypal VDNKh pavilion mullet, dropping its aiwan, adding an entrance feature meant to simulate a keyboard, retaining the “Islamic” ornament in the back, and becoming Computational Technology. Armenia became the Food Processing Industry and, in 1967, Health Care, its peaked red granite frame still in place, but its concentric archways



Post-1991 capitalism rears its furry head at VDNKh.
Charles Shaw

covered with white boards. Today it is home to a mini-mall of discount drug stores.

Gentler reincarnations were in store for Uzbekistan, which retained its towering columned sun-shaped pergola and became Culture. Latvia became Physics. And the former Karelia, which had been housing Russian Culture, became the Pulp, Paper, and Resin Industry. Ukraine, one of the most stunning structures, and perhaps not coincidentally the homeland of Nikita Sergeievich himself, was simply relabeled Agriculture, exonerating the horses, sheep, and beehives that still adorn its walls.



WHEN THE SOVIET UNION COLLAPSED in 1991, VDNKh became a petri dish for crony capitalism, garish display, illicit activity, and neglect—in other words, Yeltsin’s Russia.

After initially being protected as a state-controlled entity, it was privatized in 1994, allowing waves of speculators to buy pavilions on the cheap and strip them of resources before reselling or turning them into warehouses for a vast weekend clothing and goods market. Successive investors jockeyed for control of the park, to charge rent and protection money, and for the rights to deploy its resources (including a branch of the Moscow police, a power station, and a customs point). The game was high-stakes, and VDNKh was the scene



Nostalgia for sale: Rooster on a Stick candy, the “taste of childhood,” in front of the former Pavilion to the Friendship of Peoples.

Charles Shaw

of several shootings between competing criminal gangs.

Although the park became “re-publicized,” the legacy of the 1990s has proved difficult to erase. The first few to seize buildings in the 1990s have squatted, paying almost nothing in rent, and engaging in mysterious activities hidden behind sign-less entrances and foggy windows. Meanwhile, the landlord of a lovingly restored but under-visited grocery store recently complained that without paying exorbitant fees to several of VVTs’s daughter companies—the ones which actually collect the protection racket—he cannot advertise his store at the entrance next to the signs for the dolphins, sharks, and cats.

Illegal buildings sprouted like mushrooms in the 1990s. And though over 100 have been demolished, a robust new love for private property has made others sacrosanct, even though most are restaurants, bars, and even a bathhouse whose clapboard and vinyl exteriors were not meant to last. The most notorious of the new is a private mansion, nicknamed the “castle of VDNKh,” built on the small lakefront between the Fishery

and Rabbit-rearing pavilions by Yakub Yakubov, an Azerbaijan-born businessman best known for owning famed Moscow businesses like the Praga restaurant and the Yeliseevskii department store, as well as various casinos when gambling was still legal in the city. It has a stunning array of arches, gables, turrets, and decks, and looks like a metasized putt-putt obstacle. While certainly a garish mix of corruption and disdain for his fellow man, it would be a great pavilion to Privatization, to be preserved in situ as perfectly capturing the spirit of the age. Yakubov also seems to have built a home in the same style in Brooklyn.

As the mistakes of the 1990s are increasingly being “corrected” in Putin’s Russia, there is renewed talk of a grand renovation. However, a plan to intersperse luxury hotels and shopping between the pavilions has foundered due to cost and lack of consensus.

Until a comprehensive renewal plan emerges, VDNKh’s pavilions offer object lessons in different post-Soviet afterlives.

The spectacular, ruined outdoor Green Theater is being absorbed back into the earth a generation after it was built.

The irreplaceable Veterinary and Hunting and Fur pavilions have been lost to fire.

Naked Capitalism has become literal: the former pavilion to the North Caucasus (i.e. modern Chechnya), and later Education, could be renamed the Pavilion of Base Instincts, where fright, sex, alcohol, pain, nostalgia, and even cuteness are for sale at its haunted house and museums of Torture, Woman’s Delight, Drunkenness, Retro USSR, and a butterfly display.

Elsewhere there are two competing live shark habitats, one of which is housed in the former pavilion to Friendship of the Peoples.

Russian Retail can be found in just about every corner of the park. The troika of garden seeds, beekeeping equipment, and discount herbal medicine are sometimes perfectly wed to their spaces, like the daycare center and garden seed mall in the pavilion to Young Naturalists (which also features

four haunting busts to child martyrs of World War II). But they are usually found in more incongruous settings, like the Space Pavilion.

Former Soviet republics that are dependent on Russia, such as Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, and Belarus, have opted for an Updated-Chamber-of-Commerce echo of VDNKh's original purpose. They have funded expensive restorations in order to showcase their national wares, allowing visitors to sip Armenian cognac on comfy couches and eat *beshbarmak* at a Kyrgyz cafe, conveniently ignoring that today's Armenian pavilion is the former Siberia, and that Krygyzstan was actually Estonia. Meanwhile, Kazakhstan's oil-fueled independence and Ukraine's flirtation with the EU are likely the reason why restoration plans for these pavilions have faltered.

Finally, there are the Labors of Love, where Soviet flames are tended by those with no desire to be paid. The Circular Movie Panorama, built after Khrushchev's angst-producing trip to America, rotates the same seven 20-minute films in perpetuity, such as "Take us with you, tourists!" and "Volga – Russian river." (For show times, visit <http://krugorama.narod.ru>)



ON A RECENT SUMMER AFTERNOON a group of us visited The Republic of Song, one of the grandest monuments of them all. This museum to singer-songwriters, or bards, is only the latest identity for a pavilion that has worn many names, including Building Materials, Atomic Energy for Peaceful Purposes, Light Industry, and Defense of Nature. Its soaring central vestibule encased in opaque glass is barren of religious iconography, creating a sort of bland Soviet ceremonial space suited to each of its transformations. The entrance is adorned by bulbous mosaics that simulate Soviet banners and amphorae. And extending outwards from the glassy central tower are two boxy pale-blue wings whose intricate *bas reliefs* have long since been lost.



Charles Shaw

We opened the door and were greeted by a tan, silver-haired man in orange board shorts, a black leather biker's vest, and a Harley bandana who jumped down from his cot in an ante-room.

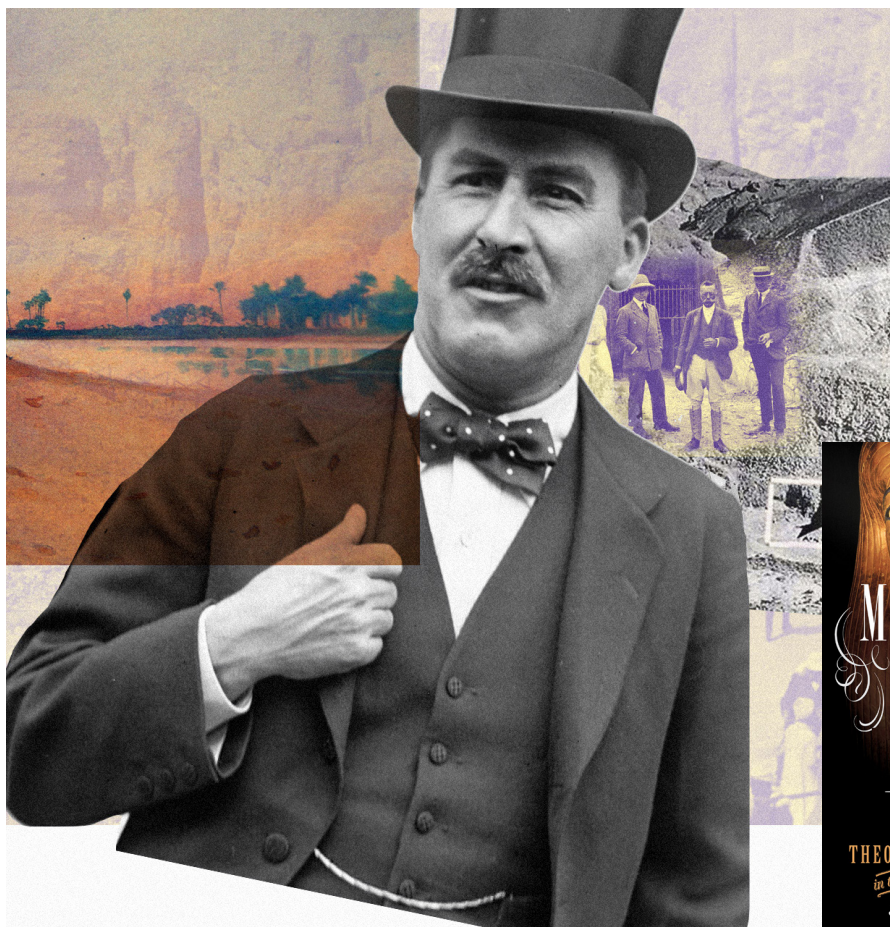
The central hall was sunlit, drawing my eyes up the glass walls to the pastel-colored carved roof, inviting a religious form of contemplation. In one corner of the room was a bar bedecked with late-Soviet motorcycle banners, in another was a campsite diorama that one could find at a Boy Scout convention, and in another was a sparse "typical Soviet kitchen," meant to simulate the gestation site of bard songs and dissident discussions. Looking back at the man's cluttered nook, it was clear that he lived there.

He led us generously through the central hall, adorned with portraits of Soviet bards, with the most famous—Bulat Okudzhava and Vladimir Vysotsky—hidden modestly at the far end. Like many who work (or live) in VDNKh, he was either hazy or reluctant to part with the details. He couldn't speak to any of the building's previous incarnations and as to its acquisition he shrugged and smiled, saying that several years ago they had merely "gotten a good price on the rent."

We continued the tour into a darkened concert hall while our guide struggled to explain the connection among Soviet bard music, motorcycling, and opposition politics—something about freedom of expression. He ushered us into the final, darkened gallery, like an old aunt in a house full of antiques, whose homespun quality was created by the old press clippings from concerts and the giant airbrushed portrait of Vysotsky that caught the faint light.

I expected to be asked for an admission fee when we left. Instead, he gave each of us a flyer to next week's big event: a politically-inspired biker poetry open mic.

Our host was no Communist, but he, like many of VDNKh's gatekeepers, had found a place in the park's dark corners to keep a Soviet votive burning amidst pharmacies, furs, and dolphins.



In King Tut's Shadow

by Darrell Hartman

WHAT WAS IT LIKE to discover an ancient Egyptian tomb?

If the breathless records from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are to be believed, it was an experience almost too marvelous to be grasped. Having cleared a portal back through the centuries, the dirt-caked explorer stepped through it, and there, amid the coded relics, found himself face-to-face with an eerily recognizable predecessor from distant antiquity—a mute figure, surprising in its completeness, long dead and yet in the immediacy and strangeness of the encounter, somehow very much alive.

Tunneling into ancient tombs was laborious—they had been designed to foil grave robbers, after all, and the intervening millennia had filled them with rocky debris. Arrival in the burial chamber was often disorienting. In the poor light, explorers momentarily mistook exquisitely mummified domestic animals for live ones. They found stacks of hard goods in the sarcophagi, but also dried flowers and the leavings of a last meal, as though only a few weeks or months had passed since the long-distant funerary rites. Arthur Weigall, an Egyptologist of the period who wrote eloquently about such moments, compared them to walking through a tear in the curtain of time.



The sealed knot on King Tut's tomb, 1923.
 Photograph by Harry Burton (colorized 2013)

Even more striking, almost magical, was the quickness with which that curtain repaired itself. Upon discovery, items in the tombs started visibly to decay. The sudden change in temperature and atmosphere made vivid colors fade and carved outlines all but disappear. A scholar assigned to copy hieroglyphs inside King Tut's tomb when it was discovered in 1922 records that he worked to the sound of ancient wood creaking and snapping as the new air flowed in.

Of course, many items of immeasurable scholarly, artistic, and commercial value did emerge from these once-sacred spaces, and in good condition. That value has made them the objects of all sorts of disputes and passions, and there's no shortage of either in the story of Theodore Davis, the American tycoon who played a central role in the development of Egyptology.

For more than a decade, beginning with his uncovering of the resting place of Yuya and Thuyu—parents of the glamorous Queen Tiye—in 1905, Davis was the world's best-known opener of tombs. He made the Valley of the Kings his personal sandlot, uncovering eighteen sarcophagi between 1902 and 1914 and paying for the clearing of a dozen more. He was assumed to have exhausted the valley by the time he died, in 1915. But then Howard Carter and George Herbert, Earl of Carnarvon, unearthed the perfectly intact resting place of King Tut, the likes of which the world had never seen before.

In a single stroke, Davis and his legacy were all but buried.



JOHN M. ADAMS TRIES to exhume both in his new biography of Davis, *The Millionaire and the Mummies*. His is an approving portrait overall; given his subject's reputation as a vulgarian and pushy egotist, it might thus be considered revisionist. The Davis who emerges here is brusque, virile, bent on advancement and self-improvement—in short, an archetypal alpha male of the Gilded Age.

Adams seems aware of his subject's limitations. "He was not a particularly reflective man," he writes, "and if spiritual or philosophical matters did not concern him much it was because the world had rewarded the pragmatic, materialistic traits his youth and young manhood had developed." What, then, did Davis *feel* during those enviable through-the-curtain encounters? We learn that while contemplating Thuyu's tomb he exclaimed, "Oh my god!" and promptly fainted. Beyond that, Adams offers precious little.

More interesting than Davis himself, perhaps, is the underlying story of how a self-educated opportunist from the American provinces became worldly enough to develop an enthusiasm for unearthing ancient tombs along the Nile. The book also sheds light on a pivotal moment in archaeology, at least in Egypt, when the culling of ancient ruins went from flat-out plundering to something resembling disinterested scholarship.

Davis was instrumental in the change. There's some irony here, given that he made his fortune the way many did in the Gilded Age: by lying and bribing more effectively than his rivals. Born in 1838 in Springfield, New York, Davis grew up in Detroit, which was then still a frontier town. He worked as a lawyer in Iowa, then in post-Civil War New York City; he lived very comfortably, but it wasn't until he started digging in the American Wilds that he became a millionaire.

Employing shady methods, to say the least, Davis formed a syndicate that invested in undeveloped territory around Lake Superior. He and his east-coast partners cut canals that opened up swathes of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, putting small armies of men to work felling trees and sucking layers of muck out of swamps. "The canal builders operated five huge steam dredges, had laid track for the two locomotives and dump cars that removed the digging debris, used pile drivers to secure the sides of the canal," Adams notes. "Nitroglycerin was used to blast apart the hardpan clay at the bottom." These were rougher techniques than the ones Davis would later employ in Egypt.

The canals opened the Upper Peninsula to mining, which had of course been the plan all along. By 1872, the area was the source of 70 percent of

all copper coming out of the United States. Davis made a killing by leasing land to mining companies here and elsewhere, and his profits allowed him to go into comfortable semiretirement in Newport, Rhode Island by middle age.

Around this time, he started wintering in Europe. Like many *nouveaux riches* of the day—and of many another time and place—he decided that his ticket to sophistication lay in collecting art. Davis, who was self-educated, attacked the hobby with his usual brute enthusiasm. "If you see any very fine picture which can be bought very cheap, please advise me," he wrote to his art consultant, the Renaissance historian Bernard Berenson.

Davis started enjoyed art-buying a little less after acquiring a Da Vinci for a song, only to have it revealed to be a fake.



BY THE 1890s, The Land of the Nile (which was occupied by Britain throughout his time there) had become Davis's new obsession. Having toiled for years in a nation that was energetically on the rise, he enjoyed lingering in one that wasn't. "All countries seem youthful in comparison with Egypt," he rhapsodized. Also, here he could prise precious objects from the ground himself, with little doubt as to their authenticity.

He didn't literally discover these treasures himself, of course. Davis, who was in his sixties by the time he commissioned his first dig, spent much of his time in Egypt cruising up and down the Nile in his boat, the *Beduin*, with his longtime companion and mistress, Emma Andrews. He tended to visit excavation sites only when the archaeologist he'd hired or partnered with had something new to show him.

The actual digging was done by local workmen, or *fellahin*, who were hired and supervised (and routinely extorted) by an Egyptian *reis*, or foreman, who in turn reported to the European archaeologist in charge. The toilers burrowed into hillsides and the desert floor, smashing through boulders with pickaxes and carrying tons of rocky debris out in baskets. In the *Valley of the Kings*, Daniel Mey-



Theodore Davis alongside Mr. and Mrs. Weigall and E. R. Ayrton at the Valley of the Kings, 1907.
John M. Adams, *The Millionaire and the Mummies*

erson's colorful chronicle of the discovery of Tut's tomb, describes the job in vivid terms:

By day, the labor was backbreaking, painstaking, grueling: There was the endless digging and sifting, often yielding nothing but a handful of dust; the crawling and clambering through suffocating underground passages filled with thousands of bats, centuries of their waste creating a poisonous atmosphere; the unstable shale under the solid limestone threatening to collapse. Death or crippling accidents were an ever-present danger.

Davis, aboard the *Beduin*, kept a leisurely distance from these discomforts. "We are happy on this wonderful Nile, with its warm, certain and hospitable sun and mild sweet airs," he wrote. But if such an approach seems indulgently disengaged, it compares favorably to that taken by Lord Carnarvon in his early excavating years. The so-called "Carnarvon Tablet" hails from this era, when his lordship insisted on handling ancient relics himself, and the damage he wreaked on this important historical document has caused Egyptologists no small amount of anguish.

Adams argues that compared to other wealthy foreigners running digs, Davis did things responsibly. If he was impatient to make progress, he was

also ruthlessly methodical, committing funding for years on end in a time when many patrons invested in dig sites the way they might bet at the racetrack.

Whereas his penny-pinching contemporaries relied on guesswork, Davis used his vast resources to hack the Valley of the Kings systematically down to bedrock—the archaeological equivalent of strip-mining. Davis wrote, not a little bit disingenuously, that he considered it "a satisfaction to know the entire valley, even if it yielded nothing." It was almost as though, in an age of progress, it was not only passé but unmanly to be making tentative stabs at the earth.

With his purposeful, scaled-up approach, you might say Davis Americanized the excavation process—all the more remarkable, then, that he ultimately lost out to Carnarvon, an English playboy who once quipped, "I would rather discover a royal tomb than win the Derby!"



IMPRESSIVELY, GIVEN HIS ADVANCING AGE, Davis did slither and crab-walk into tombs once they'd been cleared; he even insisted on going first. He'd slogged through the Midwestern wilderness as a young man, and he was no claustro-

phobe. One imagines him relishing the opportunity to prove his fitness. For Davis, the Egyptian excursions provided more than one form of enrichment. Rudyard Kipling's definition of archaeology comes to mind: "A scholarly pursuit with all the excitement of a gold prospector's life."

The Egyptomania that gripped America around the time Davis started digging—a time, it may be worth noting, that preceded Hollywood—revolved around glamorous royals. And so, embedded in all those headline-grabbing tales of Davis's discoveries was an image—a validating one, to say the least—of an elite representative of contemporary America meeting the leader of the civilization that had built the Pyramids.

Davis was in thrall to these ancient royals, but often cavalier once he'd found them. Thinking (incorrectly, it turned out) he'd discovered the tomb of Queen Tiye he obnoxiously described her in an interview as "a very beautiful and attractive lady whom I am sorry I did not have the opportunity of meeting."

Davis brought careless entourages into tombs, unfortunately a common practice at the time. Mummies were pawed at, and crumbled; priceless items were handed out like party favors. Adams relates the story of the French Empress Eugénie, the widow of Napoleon III, who, feeling fatigued after her descent into a tomb, helped herself to a 3,500-year-old chair. (Miraculously, it did not break.)

Unlike Carnarvon and others, Davis was not contractually entitled to a share of the spoils. The Antiquities Service, however, let him keep many treasures that he unearthed as "gifts." (It is thus likely that Egyptian nationalists of the time would have viewed him as just another foreign pillager. Adams does not go into this, or discuss how Davis fits into the cultural-heritage disputes raging today.) Many of these precious keepsakes Davis gave away, hoping to impress friends. The skull of a Ramesside prince became a paperweight on his desk in Newport. And he donated liberally, when he felt like it, to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and to the Metropolitan. "Davis made the point," Adams writes, "that immortal masterpieces should be



Davis's one-time employee, Howard Carter, helps empty King Tut's tomb in 1923, all but burying Davis's legacy. [Wikimedia Commons](#)

shared with the entire world—just as soon as he was done with them."

From a reader's distance, Davis seems easy to pigeonhole. Yet he also experienced something that mere museum-goers and even today's meticulous professionals can only guess at: the feeling of stepping into the dark, blind, with no idea—be it from cameras, sonar, or any other modern spoiler alert—of what may lie inside. Such rarified moments might have set his soul alight.

Or he may have been reveling in something more banal. As Adams puts it, "Davis was a rogue, a criminal who found that great wealth did not bring personal fulfillment, and like other robber barons of the Gilded Age he tried to fill his soul with fine art and romance." Unlike the others, he didn't look up, but down.

